STUDENTS' EVALUATION OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE COURSEBOOK ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AT NATIONAL ACADEMY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
Received:	**19/4/2021**	This study is aimed to explore the evaluations of M.A students at National Academy of Public Administration on the English coursebook for Specific Purpose named *English for Public Administration*. Though English for Specific Purpose of Public Administration has been one of the compulsory courses for the first semester master students at National Academy of Public Administration for years, there has been no research done to evaluate the current English for Specific Purpose coursebook so far. This study follows a quantitative research approach, in which a survey questionnaire is designed for 117 M.A students at National Academy of Public Administration. The research's results reveal both suitability and unsuitability of the coursebook. In other words, the coursebook meets partly the learners' needs of aims, content, and communicative skill development. Besides, there are some weaknesses that need improving so that the coursebook can meet better the learners' needs. It is expected that the study will make a contribution to the improvement of the coursebook for the following courses as well as the development of English for Specific Purpose teaching and learning at National Academy of Public Administration.
Revised:	**02/6/2021**	
Published:	**08/6/2021**	
KEYWORDS		
Teaching materials		
ESP		
Coursebook		
Evaluation		
Learner's need		

ĐÁNH GIÁ CỦA HỌC VIÊN ĐỐI VỚI GIÁO TRÌNH TIẾNG ANH CHUYÊN NGÀNH QUẢN LÝ CÔNG TẠI HỌC VIỆN HÀNH CHÍNH QUỐC GIA

Lâm Thị Thuân

Học viện Hành chính Quốc gia

| THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	**19/4/2021**	Nghiên cứu nhằm tổng hợp những đánh giá từ học viên cao học tại Học viện Hành chính Quốc gia về giáo trình *Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành Quản lý công* họ đang sử dụng. Thực tế học phần tiếng Anh chuyên ngành Quản lý công là một trong những học phần chung bắt buộc ở học kỳ đầu tiên đối với học viên cao học tại Học viện Hành chính Quốc gia, song cho đến nay chưa có nghiên cứu nào đánh giá về sự phù hợp của cuốn giáo trình tiếng Anh chuyên ngành Quản lý công hiện đang dùng. Nghiên cứu này theo cách tiếp cận của một nghiên cứu định lượng, trong đó một bảng câu hỏi khảo sát được thiết kế dành cho đối tượng nghiên cứu là 117 học viên cao học tại Học viện Hành chính Quốc gia. Các kết quả nghiên cứu chỉ ra ưu điểm và những điểm chưa phù hợp của giáo trình. Giáo trình đã phần nào đáp ứng nhu cầu của người học như mục đích, nội dung học và giúp học viên phát triển phần nào các kỹ năng giao tiếp ngôn ngữ. Tuy nhiên, giáo trình còn một số điểm cần cải thiện để có thể đáp ứng tốt hơn nhu cầu của người học trong các khóa học sau. Nghiên cứu kỳ vọng đóng góp vào việc cải thiện giáo trình cho các khóa học sau cũng như cải thiện tốt hơn việc dạy và học Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành tại Học viện Hành chính Quốc gia.
Ngày hoàn thiện:	**02/6/2021**	
Ngày đăng:	**08/6/2021**	
TỪ KHÓA		
Tài liệu giảng dạy		
Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành		
Giáo trình		
Đánh giá		
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1. Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has grown to become one of the most prominent areas of English language teaching. There are various courses aimed at specific areas, for example English for business purposes, English for travelling purposes, or English for administrative purposes. ESP is an enterprise involving education, training and practice drawing upon three major realms of knowledge: language, pedagogy, and the students' specialist areas of interest. To meet the needs of the learners, many ESP coursebooks have been designed. McGrath [1] defines a coursebook as "a textbook on which a course is based". Tomlinson [2] shares similar point as considering a coursebook as "a textbook which provides the core materials for a course". In his viewpoint, a coursebook consists of not only work on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and functions but also work on the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Also, he states that coursebook refers to any material "which is used to help to teach language learners and can be in the form of a textbook, a workbook, a cassette, a CD-Rom, a video, a photocopied handout, a newspaper, a paragraph written on a whiteboard."

The choice of materials is also very crucial to determine the quality of learning-teaching procedure [3]. Materials especially authentic materials play a significant role in foreign language teaching as to provide the advantages and the effectiveness of the being used materials so that the material can be decided to be reused and adapted to meet the need of the particular teaching situation or changed [4]. Also, evaluation and adaptation of a coursebook are ongoing must-do tasks to ensure the training quality [5]. Ellis [6] emphasizes that evaluation helps choose among the available materials the most suitable one to use for a particular situation and determine whether the material which has been chosen works for that situation or it should be replaced by a better one. Besides, coursebook evaluation is not only to assess "a resource in achieving aims and objectives that have already been set in terms of learner needs" but also involves elements of comparison, especially where existing materials are being challenged by newly produced materials [7].

Some scholars divide material evaluation in general and coursebook evaluation in specific into three main types depending on the reasons for evaluation, namely Preliminary, Formative and Summative [2]. Preliminary evaluation is done before the beginning of a course to select "the most relevant and appropriate materials for a particular group of learners", and identify "specific aspects of the published materials" needed adapting to suit the purposes of the evaluators. Formative evaluation is carried out during the course to shape the material during its lifetime and suggest the improvement of the material in the future, whereas Summative evaluation is carried out at the end of the course to "assess impact and to provide information that can be fed into repeat versions" of the material [8]. Another way of dividing materials evaluation introduced by Tomlinson [2] and McGrath [1] consists of three types of materials evaluation namely Pre-use, Whilst-use and Post-use. Pre-use evaluation focuses on predictions of potential value; Whilst-use evaluation focuses on awareness and description of what the learners are actually doing whilst the materials are being used and Post-use evaluation focuses on analysis of what happened as a result of using the materials.

Evaluation occupies a prominent place in the ESP process as seen in Figure 1.
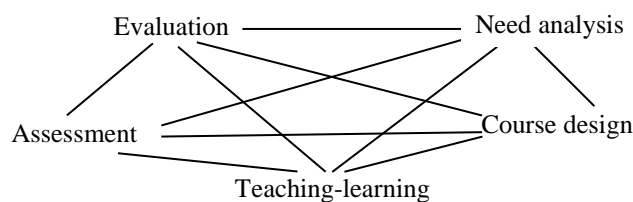
Figure 1. *Stages in the ESP process* [8]

Hutchinson and Waters [9] give a model including four steps of evaluation as in Figure 2.
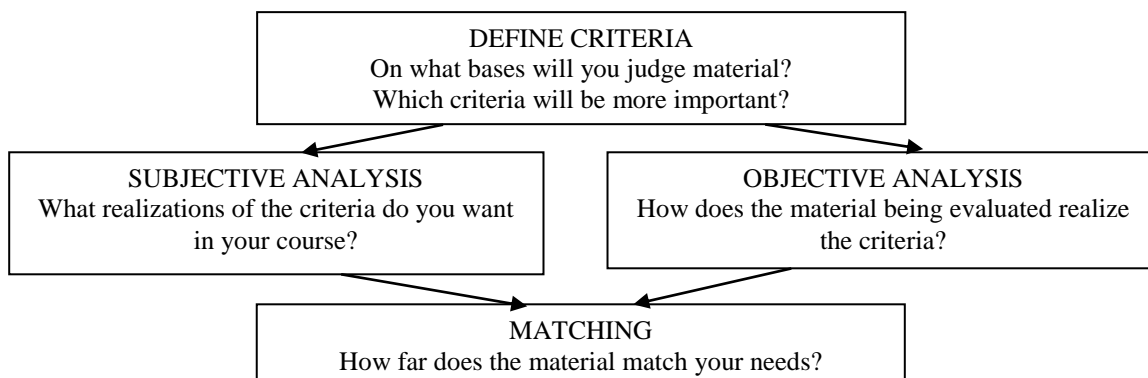
Figure 2. *The material evaluation process [9]*

Different authors also give different points of view on material evaluation. Hutchinson and Waters [9] consider evaluation as "a matter of judging the fitness of something for a particular purpose". Evaluation is, then, concerned with relative merit - no absolute good or bad - only degrees of fitness for the required purpose. Evaluation can be based on the opinions of course designers, material writers, teachers and also the opinions of learners. Tomlinson also agrees that materials evaluation is "the systematic appraisal of the value of materials in relation to their objectives and to the objectives of the learners using them" [2]. Coursebook evaluation is the systematic appraisal of the value of the coursebook in relation to both its objectives and the learners' objectives. In other words, the value of a material or a coursebook should be evaluated by considering whether the learning points are potentially useful to the learners, whether the learning procedures can maximize the likelihood of the learners actually learning what they want and need to learn. The materials evaluation also needs criteria for objective and subjective analysis including the learners for whom the materials intended, the aims of the course and the aims of the materials' content: language description, language points, proportion of work on each macro-skill, subject-matter areas, types of topics, etc. and other criteria such as price, quantities, availability and so on. There is hardly a perfect textbook; therefore, teachers should always have the option of assigning supplementary materials based on their own specific needs in their own specific teaching situation [10].

Together with the worldwide trend to learn ESP, the teaching staff of Faculty of Foreign Languages, Department of International Cooperation at National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) has compiled some ESP coursebooks for some specific fields including the ESP coursebook for Public Administration. The main objective of this ESP coursebook is to provide the students with linguistic knowledge relevant to their field and skills up to the expectation of their future employment. Up to now, there have been no evaluations on the coursebook to see how far it meets the students' needs; therefore, it is necessary to have the coursebook ESP for Public Administration evaluated. This study is aimed to explore the evaluations of M.A students at NAPA on the English coursebook for Specific Purpose named *English for Public Administration* for the improvement of the coursebook in the following courses. It is crucial to help ESP teachers to make frequent activities regarding textbook evaluation or material development and adaptation to better their students' English [11] and to choose authentic materials to conform to the teaching context of this century [12].

2. Methodology

NAPA is an educational institution from Ministry of Home Affairs undertaking training the civil servants working in administrative offices from central to local governments in Vietnam. NAPA educates both BA and MA students of public administration with English for Public

Administration as the compulsory ESP subject. The curriculum of ESP for MA students of public administration is required in the first semester consisting of 60 periods. MA students of all ages at NAPA come from different parts of the countries with different language background and attitudes toward learning English. They are required to achieve language ability on a six-point scale, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, level A2. Accordingly, 14 aged 38 to 50 among total 18 teachers at Faculty of Foreign Languages, Department of International Cooperation are assigned to design syllabus and coursebooks and take the responsibility for teaching and assessing these students. The objective of the ESP course is to provide the students with linguistic knowledge relevant to their field and skills up to the expectation of their future employment.

The coursebook currently used in the ESP course for MA students of public administration is titled *English for Public Administration.* The objective of the coursebook is to introduce some basic concepts in public administration and provide students with specialized vocabulary and knowledge which are useful for their future jobs. The coursebook content consists of 6 units covering 6 topics: Administration and Public Administration, Management and Public Management, Government and Governance, Local Government, Civil Service Management, E-government and its Roles in Public Sector Reforms. Each unit has 3 parts namely Reading Text 1, Reading Text 2 and Supplementary Exercises, in each of which there are numerous activities deployed to broaden learners' vocabulary and improve their competence of Reading, Speaking/ Discussion, Summary/Writing and Translation. Types of task and exercise in the coursebook are various in aspects of language learning: Vocabulary (guessing the meanings of words, giving equivalent meanings and gap filling); Reading (matching, scanning, skimming, comprehension questions, True-False sentences, gap filling and matching words with their definitions); Speaking/ Discussion (Pair/ Group/ Whole Discussions); Writing (writing summary); and Translation (translating from English into Vietnamese and translating from Vietnamese into English).

The participants of the study include 117 MA students aged from 24 to 46 with 44 female and 73 male of class HC24 – MA of public administration at NAPA. At the time when the survey was conducted, these students had passed the MA entrance exam with minimum English competence at A2 level, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Among these 117 students, over two third had been learning English for over 10 years and the others had been learning English for less than 10 years (5 to 10).

Questionnaire was used as an instrument to collect data for this study. It was designed to collect students' information on evaluation of the current-used ESP coursebook of public administration at NAPA. The questionnaire contained questions of the learners' personal information, the learners' evaluation of the current ESP coursebook of public administration at NAPA (content, time allocation, vocabulary, grammar, skill development and follow-up activities) and their needs of the course.

3. Finding and discussions

3.1. Learners' attitude towards learning ESP

117 students participating in the research provided us with a variety of answers to show their mixed English ability, experience and age as described above. Though all of these learners were at least at A2 level, their purposes of learning ESP were quite various as shown in table 1.

The data in table 1 indicated that the most important purpose of learning ESP to many learners was to widen ESP vocabulary and to read technical documents in English. About 55.56% of the learners considered widening ESP vocabulary as their most important purpose, 32.48 % thought it was quite important and only 4.27% of them ranked this purpose of the least importance. Similarly, reading technical documents in English was seen as the most important purpose to 41.88% of the learners. Besides, there were only 2.56% considering that improving English basis

competence was the most important while 41.03% thought it was important and 11.11% put it of least importance. In contrast, applying for a job in a foreign company seemed to be the least important purpose to these learners when none of them considered it was the most important and only 2.56% of them saw that it was quite important. Additionally, some of the learners added more other purposes of learning ESP such as improving communicative skill and some claimed that they learned ESP to be able to watch document films or news on media.

Table 1. *Learners' ranking of their purposes of learning ESP*

Total number of informants: 117 (class: HC24)

Purposes	Least Important	OK	Important	Very important	Most important
To read technical documents/ texts in English	3 (2.56%)	2 (1.71%)	8 (6.84%)	55 (47.01%)	49 (41.88%)
To widen ESP vocabulary	5 (4.27%)	4 (3.42%)	5 (4.27%)	38 (32.48%)	65 (55.56%)
To improve English basis competence	13 (11.11%)	37 (31.62%)	48 (41.03%)	16 (13.68%)	3 (2.56%)
To apply for a job in a foreign company	38 (32.48%)	42 (35.90%)	34 (29.06%)	3 (2.56%)	0 (0%)
No purpose/ other purposes	58 (49.57%)	32 (27.35%)	22 (18.80%)	5 (4.27%)	0 (0%)

3.2. Learners' evaluation of the current ESP material

In terms of learners' needs met by the ESP coursebook, the learners were asked to evaluate how much the coursebook met their needs. There were 37 learners (31.62%) being satisfied with the ESP coursebook, 16.23% of them thought that the ESP coursebook met their needs enough. One noticed thing was that there was a significant percentage of the learners (52.13%) finding that the ESP coursebook met their needs little. Obviously, the findings indicated that the ESP coursebook did not really meet most of the learners' needs, and it should have had some changes to be more appropriate to the students and met more their needs.

The learners' detailed evaluations of the content of ESP coursebook were shown in table 2.

Table 2. *Learners' attitude towards the content of the ESP coursebook*

Total number of informants: 117

Categories	Results	
	No of participants	Percent (%)
Topics are		
1. very interesting	7	5.98
2. interesting	18	15.38
3. OK	59	50.43
4. boring	33	28.21
5. very boring	0	0
The information in the coursebook is		
6. very useful	3	2.56
7. useful	93	79.49
8. not very useful	21	17.95
9. useless	0	0
The coursebook provides learners with		
10. update information	48	41.03
11. no update information	69	58.97

As can be seen from table 2, no one thought that the topics covered in the ESP coursebook were very boring but nearly one third of them (28.21%) thought that the topics were boring,

whereas most of the learners (50.43%) thought that the topics covered in the ESP coursebook were Ok and only 15.38% found that the topics were interesting. These figures showed that the majority of the learners found the topics in the ESP coursebook satisfying but many of them preferred more interesting topics. The figures in table 2 also revealed that no participants thought the information in the ESP coursebook was useless and while there were 93 out of 117 informants (79.49%) thought that the information was useful, 17.95% found it not very useful. However, information in the ESP coursebook should have been paid more attention in terms of its update as 58.97% of the learners who thought that the coursebook should have provided them with more update information.

In terms of time allocation for ESP course, 60 periods seemed not to satisfy the majority. The most proportion of the learners (49.57%) agreed that it was little while 35% thought that it was enough and only 15.38 % found it too much and none found it too little. With 6 units in the coursebook, it meant learners could have up to ten periods each unit including further practice and revision or tests. However, there were still 17.95% that found the information in the course not very useful and nearly about 41.03% of the learners thought the course should have provided them with more update information, this time allocation was impossibly sufficient. In most of the learners' opinion, time for an ESP course should have been longer up to 75 or 90 periods, so the coursebook should have covered more topics with more various and interesting content.

Besides providing the learners a range of technical vocabulary through reading texts, the ESP coursebook introduced to the learners new grammar items and structures. The quantity of technical vocabulary and the level of difficulty in grammar in each unit in the coursebook were evaluated by the participants in table 3.

Table 3. *Learners' attitude towards vocabulary and grammar*

Total number of informants: 117

Categories	Results	
	No of participants	Percent (%)
Technical vocabulary in each unit is		
1. too much	71	60.68
2. much	32	27.35
3. enough	14	11.97
4. little	0	0
5. too little	0	0
Grammar in the coursebook is		
6. very difficult	37	31.62
7. difficult	42	35.90
8. OK	38	32.48
9. easy	0	0
10. very easy	0	0

Over a half of the learners (60.68%) thought that there was too much technical vocabulary in each unit and 27.35% of informants found that there was much technical vocabulary while the others (only 11.97%) found it enough to acquire. These figures indicated that the coursebook provided too much technical vocabulary, so learners might have found difficult to comprehend it. As a result, grammar in the coursebook was just suitable to only one third of participants (32.48%) while a majority of the learners (67.52%) found it difficult and none of them thought that the grammar structures in each unit in the coursebook were easy.

With such large technical vocabulary and difficult grammar, many of 117 informants found that activities used in the coursebook were not really useful to improve their language skills. 66 out of 117 (56.41%) found the activities used in units were monotonous while 40.17% thought they were various and plentiful. Table 4 showed how the informants failed to get sufficient practice of skills.

Table 4. *Learners' attitude towards follow-up activities*

Total number of informants: 117

Categories	Reading No/ (%)	Speaking No/ (%)	Listening No/ (%)	Writing No/ (%)
1. more than enough	106 (90.59)	36 (30.76)	12 (10.25)	32 (27.35)
2. enough	11 (9.40)	73 (62.39)	22 (18.80)	45 (38.46)
3. very little	0 (0)	3 (2.56)	81 (69.23)	33 (28.21)
4. none	0 (0)	5 (4.27)	2 (1.70)	7 (5.98)

From the data in table 4, a majority of the learners were satisfied with the practice of reading skill. 90.59% of the learners found that the practice of this skill more than enough while only 9.40% of the learners thought that it was enough and no one found it little. In terms of speaking skill, nearly two third of the learners (62.39%) claimed that the practice of this skill was enough, even 30.76% thought that this skill was more than enough and only 2.56% found that it was not enough. These figures showed that the practice of reading and speaking skills were paid more attention. However, listening skill was focused less than as 69.23% thought that the practice of listening skill was insufficient. It was suggested that much more focus should have been taken to this skill. Writing skill received many positive responses. 45 out of 117 learners (38.46%) agreed that the practice of writing skill was enough, even 27.35% thought that it was more than enough. However, there were still 28.21% of the learners needed more practice of this skill.

The learners' self-assessment of their ability to fulfill the exercises and activities provided in the ESP coursebook was described in Figure 3.

Total number of informants: 117
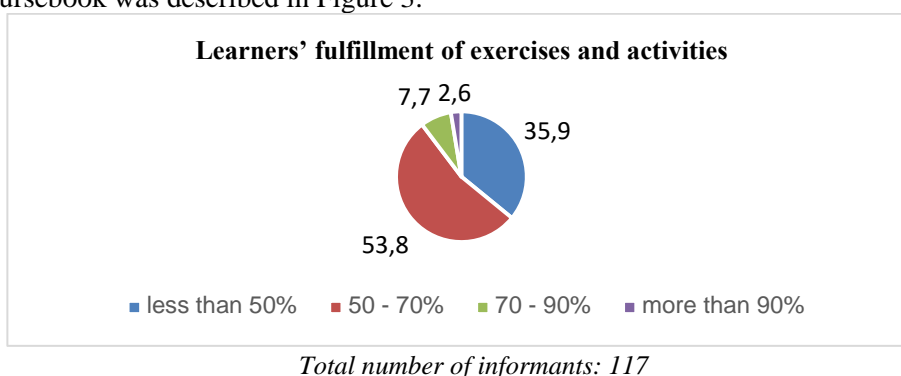
Figure 3. *Learners' fulfillment of exercises and activities*

As shown from Figure 3, only 2.6% of the learners were able to complete more than 90% of the quantity of exercises, 7.7% could fulfill 70-90% of the quantity while over a half of the students (53.8%) supposed that they could do 50-70% of the quantity and the others (35.9%) could do less than 50% of exercises provided in the coursebook. These findings showed that types of exercise should have been adjusted to attract more learners' attention and improve their skills. Selecting types of exercises and follow-up activities in the ESP coursebook was of great significance in order to motivate learners to study and meet their needs better.

Lastly, to make the coursebook better in terms of content, lay-out, vocabulary, grammar, activities, etc. the learners also gave some suggestions. The coursebook should have provided topics related to Vietnam with the shorter reading texts, in which the information should have been updated more frequently. Also, the listening section should have been added to the coursebook with more practice activities. Reading texts could be recorded to CD players so that the learners could practice listening skill more. The glossary of technical words should have been rearranged to be more helpful. They should have been classified into units and added more Vietnamese equivalents as well. Grammar structures should have been focused and presented more clearly with more grammar exercises with keys for further practice.

3.3. Major findings

The learners' main purposes of learning ESP were to widen technical vocabulary and read technical documents in English. Thus, it could be concluded that the coursebook - *English for Public Administration* was mainly suitable with the aims of the course and the aims of the MA learners at NAPA. However, many learners expected to develop their communicative skills when participating in the ESP course, so listening section should have been added and more focused in designing the coursebook for the next courses.

In terms of the topics and information, the coursebook in general met the majority of learners' needs. The topics of the reading texts were interesting, and information provided in the coursebook was useful for the learners' job in the future. For this criterion, the coursebook was a good choice for the learners because it matched their needs. However, the coursebook did not give the learners with much update information. This was a weakness of the coursebook.

Regarding to vocabulary and grammar, the amount of technical vocabulary contained in each unit was too much and difficult to comprehend. Besides, there was a less useful glossary of technical vocabulary in the coursebook. Grammar exercises were little and grammar structures were not introduced clearly enough. These were unsuitabilities of the coursebook and they should be improved next time.

In terms of follow-up activities, the coursebook met most of the learners' requirements with variety of reading, speaking and writing activities. However, the learners were not satisfied with listening activities. With these learners, they needed English technical words and phrases provided in the coursebook but improved language skills and English grammar as well.

Last but not least, according to the current programme for MA learners at NAPA, the time allocated for the ESP course was 60 periods. However, nearly a half of the learners evaluated that it was little and they needed more time for the ESP course. Therefore, it was suggested that the time allocation for the ESP course should be considered.

4. Conclusion

In general, the survey results indicate that the ESP coursebook English for Public Administration at NAPA meets partly the learners' needs in terms of aims and content. However, to make a better coursebook, there is a need of some changes. The coursebook should cover more topics related to different branches of public administration to provide the learners with sufficient technical vocabulary. Information used in the coursebook should be updated. Additionally, listening activities should be paid more attention. Within the scope of the current study, the author only focuses on the learners' evaluation on the ESP coursebook used for MA learners at NAPA. Therefore, it would be useful to carry out other researches on the learners' evaluation of other ESP coursebooks at NAPA, the ESP teachers' evaluation and the coursebook designers' evaluation in order to improve the quality of ESP teaching and learning at NAPA.

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