

# **STUDENTS' EVALUATION OF ESP COURSEBOOK IN FACULTY OF GEOGRAPHY, HNUE**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Rationale**

ESP is really one of the major activities around the world today. It is an enterprise involving education, training and practice. ESP draws upon three major realms of knowledge: language, pedagogy, and the students' specialist areas of interest. ESP teachers generally have a great variety of often-simultaneous roles, such as researchers, course designers, materials developers, testers, evaluators as well as classroom teachers. Nowadays, it is still urgent to discuss what to teach and how to teach a foreign language taking into account the objective social and professional needs of future specialists in our country.

To meet the needs of the learners, many ESP coursebooks have been designed. Together with the worldwide trend to learn ESP, the teaching staff of Faculty of English at HNUE has compiled some ESP coursebooks for some specific fields including the ESP coursebook for Faculty of Geography. In Dudley-Evans' s view, coursebook evaluation in ESP is an indispensable part of the key stages in ESP process (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998). However, no research on the coursebook evaluation has been carried out to see how far it meets the students' needs. Therefore, it is necessary to have the coursebook English for Geography (EG) evaluated by the learners themselves at Faculty of Geography at HNUE for the improvement of the coursebook in the following courses.

### **2. Aims of the study**

- To find out students' evaluative comments on ESP coursebook in Faculty of Geography with the focus both on content adequacy of the coursebook and teaching methods used in classroom.

- To offer suggestions for further improvement of the coursebook which is appropriate to the needs and expectations of the students.

### **3. Scope of the study**

The ESP course is only for the second year students at HNUE, thus the study focuses on the evaluation of the second year students of Faculty of Geography at HNUE on ESP coursebook currently used.

### **4. Method of the study**

The study follows a quantitative and quantitative research approach. Survey questionnaire was designed for the second year students in Faculty of Geography to explore their evaluation of ESP coursebook. In addition, interviews with teachers were conducted to gain more information.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Definition of coursebook evaluation**

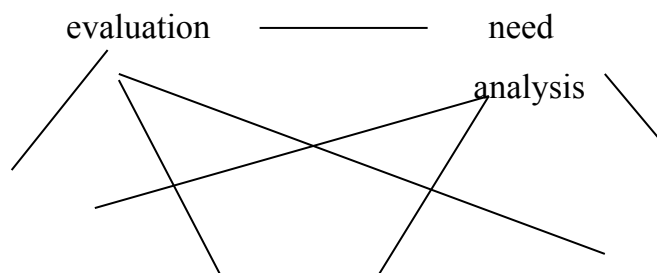
According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.96) and (Tomlinson, 1998, p.xi), coursebook evaluation is the systematic appraisal of the value of the coursebook in relation to both its objectives and the learners' objectives.

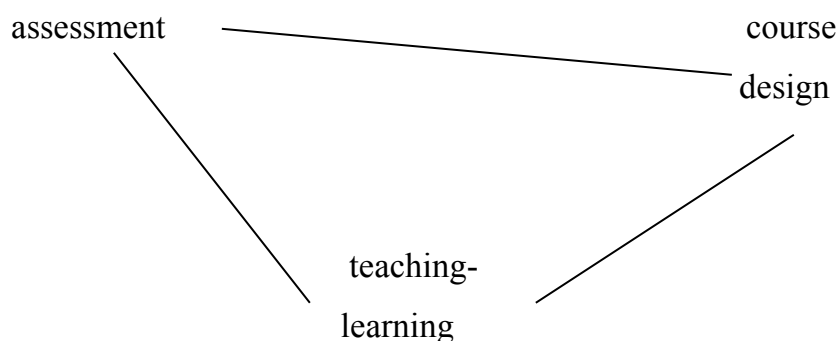
### **2. Why coursebook evaluation**

Robinson (1991), Torres (1993) and Cunningsworth (1995) state that materials especially authentic materials play a significant role in foreign language teaching. First, it confirms the coursebook and second, it adjusts the coursebook. Then, it will increase the strengths and minimize the drawback of the coursebook.

### **3. Coursebook evaluation in ESP**

In ESP, evaluation in ESP has been viewed in the broad context of the teaching and learning process. From the perspective of Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), evaluation does not stand alone, but occupies a prominent place in the ESP process, giving an ESP teacher a wealth of information on their needs, expectations and comments about the material (see Figure 1).





**Figure 1: Stages in the ESP process**

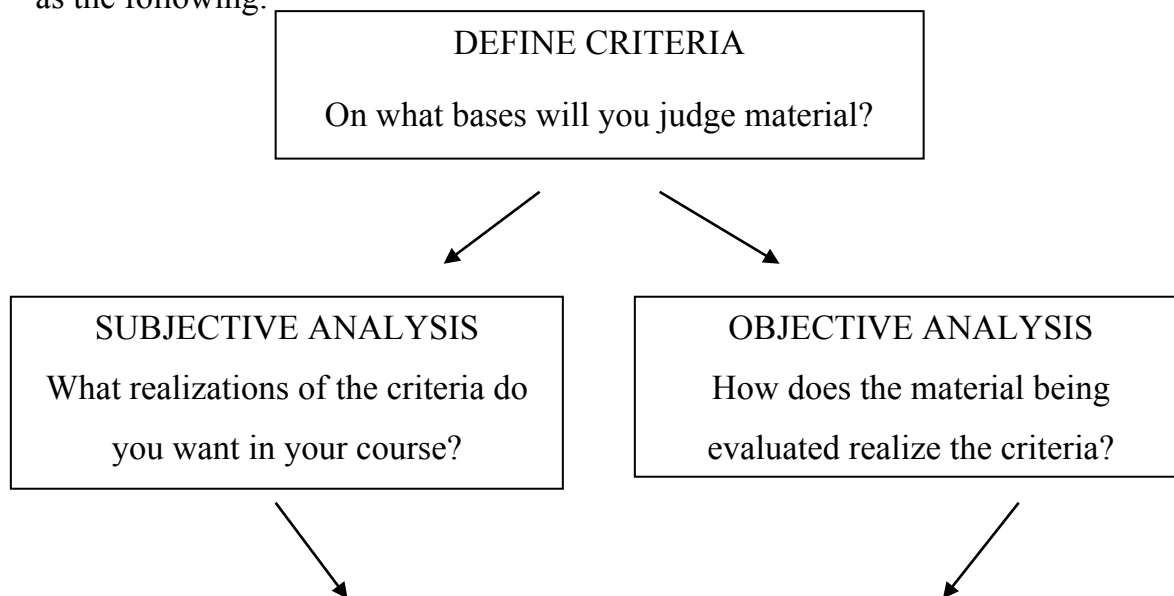
*(Taken from Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998, p. 121)*

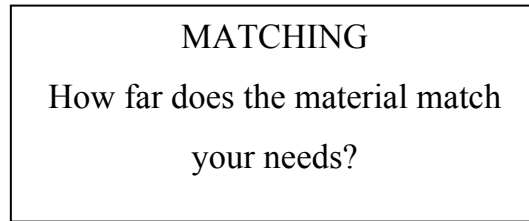
#### **4. Why students' evaluation**

First, in addition to teachers, students are the most important users of the coursebook. ESP coursebook is designed to provide the learners with some basic concepts and knowledge relevant to their field and skills up to the expectation of their future employment. Thus, the students can give their own evaluations on the coursebook related to their own needs and expectation. Secondly, being the people who use directly the coursebook, the learners will have objective comments when they are not the coursebook designers.

#### **5. Models and criteria for evaluation**

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), evaluation is a process of matching needs to available solutions. The four steps are presented in the following diagram as the following:





***Figure 2: The material evaluation process***

*(Taken from Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p. 98)*

Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.99-104) suggest five evaluation criteria for objective and subjective analysis as follows: audience, aims, content and methodology.

### **III. THE METHODOLOGY**

#### **1. Participants**

The participants of the study were 112 second-year students of Faculty of Geography – HNUE and 3 ESP teachers of Geography.

#### **2. Data collection instruments**

**2.1. Questionnaire:** is used as an instrument to collect data for this study. It is designed to collect students' information on evaluation of the current- used ESP coursebook in Faculty of Geography at HNUE.

**2.2. Interview:** is used to gather more information for the study. To make the result of the interviews objective, three interviews were conducted with three ESP teachers of Geography at three points of time. The reason for using interviews as an instrument of data collection for teachers simply because the number of teachers involved in the study is too small ( $n = 3$ ) for the use of questionnaire.

#### **2.3. Procedure**

The questionnaires were delivered to the learners then the researcher guided to the students how to write the answers appropriately. The students spent about 30 minutes thinking and answering the questions. After all the questionnaires were collected, data was analyzed and results were then interpreted. Additionally, three interviews were carried out with three ESP teachers at three different points of

time. The researcher raised the same questions to each teacher and collected all the answers. Then, all the answers were represented in six tables

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **4. 1. Objective improvements**

Based on the results of the survey, communicative skills are also of great importance to the learners. Accordingly, it is recommended that improving learners' speaking skill should be considered as one another objective of the ESP course.

##### **4. 2. Content improvements**

Firstly, in terms of topics of the reading texts, besides topics related to physical geography which the coursebook that the coursebook has introduced, more topics related to other branches of geography, such as human geography, environmental geography and regional geography should be added to the coursebook. Also, information provided in the coursebook should be more update to meet better the learners' needs. In relation to vocabulary, the amount of technical vocabulary contained in each unit should be increased. In addition, a glossary of technical vocabulary should be added to each unit or should be provided at the end of the coursebook. Besides, the grammar section with new grammar structures should be introduced more clearly with examples so that the learners can follow more easily. Additionally, more grammar exercises with keys for further practice should be added to the coursebook. Additionally, for a majority of the learners' suggestions for a better coursebook (Question 16, section II in the students survey questionnaire), funny stories related to geography are what the learners expect the coursebook will have.

##### **4. 3. Methodology improvements**

First, it is suggested that listening section should be added to the coursebook. Besides, speaking activities are too little, so speaking section in the coursebook should be paid more attention. When designing speaking activities, the teacher should give explanation as well as suggestions so that the learners can carry out

speaking activities in pairs or in groups more effectively and more excitingly. Secondly, in terms of classroom activities, two activities related to speaking, discussing and presenting skills should be more focused and used more frequently in order to develop the learners' communicative skills. Thirdly, teacher should use both English and Vietnamese in classroom and more English should be used than Vietnamese. However, any technical terms should be explained in Vietnamese when necessary because for most of the learners, there are many difficult English technical words and phrases provided in the coursebook and sometimes used in the teacher's lectures which they do not know and need their teacher' explanation.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

In general, the survey results indicate that the ESP coursebook meet partly the learners' needs in terms of audience, aims, content and methodology. However, to make a better coursebook, there is a need of some changes. The coursebook should cover more topics related to different branches of geography to provide the learners with more technical vocabulary. Information used in the coursebook should be updated. Additionally, listening and speaking activities should be paid more attention. Teaching methods should be improved to motivate better the learners to develop their skills including communicative one.

## **VI. LIMITATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

Firstly, the questionnaires were only conducted with limited population of students and teachers. Secondly, no classroom observation was made, thus no information about how the coursebook was used in the classroom was collected. Therefore, it would be useful to carry out other researches on the learners' evaluation, the ESP teachers' evaluation and the coursebook designers' evaluation on other ESP coursebooks in other faculties at HNUE in order to improve the quality of ESP teaching and learning at HNUE. Future studies need to use observation to see how the coursebook is used in the classroom and how the students respond to the activities and content of the coursebook.

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