# APPLYING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES IN MILITARY EDUCATION: A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING CADETS' PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

**Ruziyeva Mohinur Ravshonovna**
English Language Instructor Military Security and Defence University, Uzbekistan
ORCID: 0009-0007-5374-6075

**Abstract**

The development of professional English communication skills is an important consideration in higher military education. Military cadets may need English for general communication as well as for understanding professional information, reading specialized texts, exchanging information, and participating in professional and international contexts. General English instruction provides an essential language foundation, but it may not address all the communicative requirements associated with a specialized field. This paper examines how principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can inform English language instruction in military education. It adopts a qualitative, literature-based approach and synthesizes research on needs analysis, ESP course design, materials development, genre-based instruction, and assessment. The analysis identifies four connected elements for a professionally oriented ESP course: needs analysis, learning outcomes aligned with target communication tasks, context-sensitive materials and activities, and assessment that evaluates communicative performance. On this basis, the paper proposes a four-stage framework for planning ESP instruction for military cadets. The framework is a pedagogical proposal derived from the literature and has not yet been empirically tested. The paper concludes that ESP principles can help teachers make English instruction more relevant to cadets' educational and professional purposes, while further context-specific needs analysis is required before implementing a course.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes; military education; military cadets; professional communication; needs analysis; course design; language assessment.

## 1. Introduction

English is widely used as a means of communication across professional and academic domains. In military education, English may support access to professional information, further study, and communication in international or multinational settings. For cadets, therefore, learning English can involve more than developing general conversational ability. Depending on their future roles and institutional requirements, they may need to understand spoken information, read professional texts, exchange information accurately, explain procedures, and deliver structured oral reports.

General English courses provide an important foundation in grammar, vocabulary, and the four language skills. However, a general course may not sufficiently address the particular purposes for which learners in a specialized field need to use English. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) responds to this issue by relating language teaching to learners' academic or occupational needs. ESP is not simply the teaching of specialist terminology: it also involves identifying target situations, selecting relevant genres and tasks, and aligning course content and assessment with communicative purposes (Woodrow, 2018; Viana et al., 2019).



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Needs analysis is central to this process. Serafini, Lake, and Long (2015) argue for careful methodological attention when investigating the needs of specialized learner populations. In a military educational setting, needs analysis should consider learners' current proficiency, their learning priorities, and the language tasks that are relevant to their educational and anticipated professional contexts. It should not assume that all cadets have identical needs or that a generic list of military vocabulary is sufficient.

Materials and assessment also require attention. Bocanegra-Valle (2010) discusses the evaluation and design of ESP materials, while Hyland (2007) explains how genre-based pedagogy can connect language learning with the purposes and conventions of texts. Research on language assessment further suggests that assessment in specific-purpose settings should be considered in relation to the intended language-use domain (Cumming, 2001; O'Sullivan, 2012).

The purpose of this paper is to examine how selected principles of ESP can inform English language instruction in military education and to propose a literature-based framework for developing cadets' professional communication skills. The guiding research question is: How can the main principles of ESP course design be organized to support the development of military cadets' professional English communication skills?

**2. Methods**

This paper uses a qualitative, literature-based conceptual approach. It does not report an intervention, classroom experiment, survey, or interview study. Instead, it examines a selected group of publications supplied for the author's ESP coursework and relevant to the focus of the paper.

The reviewed works address five related areas: (1) needs analysis for specialized learner populations; (2) ESP course design; (3) evaluation and development of teaching materials; (4) genre and workplace communication; and (5) language assessment for specific purposes. The principal sources include Serafini et al. (2015), Woodrow (2018), Bocanegra-Valle (2010), Hyland (2007), Nickerson (2018), Cumming (2001), O'Sullivan (2012), and Viana et al. (2018).

The publications were examined thematically. Ideas relevant to the research question were grouped under four practical dimensions: identifying needs, specifying learning outcomes, selecting materials and learning tasks, and assessing performance. These dimensions were then synthesized into a proposed sequence for planning ESP instruction in a military educational context.

Because the paper is based on published literature rather than primary data, it does not make claims about the measured effectiveness of the proposed framework or the actual English-language needs of cadets at a particular institution. Those questions require institution-specific data collection and evaluation.

**3. Results**

The literature-based analysis points to four connected elements that can inform the design of ESP instruction for military cadets.

**3.1. Needs analysis as the starting point**

Needs analysis provides a basis for deciding what learners need to do through English and what language support they require. Serafini et al. (2015) emphasize the importance of methodological care when investigating specialized learner populations. Applied to military education, this means that course designers should avoid assuming that all cadets share the same proficiency level, learning priorities, or future communication tasks.

A context-sensitive needs analysis may consider learners' current language proficiency, self-identified difficulties, course objectives, teachers' observations, and the types of English-language tasks relevant to the programme. Possible methods include placement or diagnostic tests, questionnaires,



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interviews with relevant stakeholders, classroom observation, and analysis of available course or professional documents. The selection of methods should depend on access, ethical requirements, and the purpose of the investigation.

The outcome of needs analysis should be a prioritized description of target tasks and learning gaps. For example, if diagnostic evidence indicates that learners can understand short written texts but need support in oral interaction, the course may allocate more time to guided speaking, information exchange, and short presentations. Such decisions should be based on actual evidence from the learner group rather than assumptions.

**3.2. Learning outcomes and course design**

The second element is the alignment of course objectives, content, teaching activities, and assessment. Woodrow (2018) presents ESP course design as a process in which the course is shaped by learners' purposes and needs. For military cadets, possible learning outcomes may include the ability to understand relevant spoken and written information, use selected professional vocabulary accurately, ask for clarification, summarize information, describe processes, and deliver a short structured briefing.

These are illustrative outcomes, not a claim that every military programme requires the same tasks. The final outcomes should be confirmed through local needs analysis and institutional guidance. They should also be appropriate to learners' proficiency levels. Learners at lower levels may benefit from model dialogues, sentence frames, vocabulary support, and shorter adapted texts. More proficient learners may be ready for extended reading, structured discussions, presentations, and more demanding writing tasks.

An ESP course should retain systematic language development. Grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and the four skills remain important; the difference is that they are selected and practised in relation to meaningful target tasks rather than taught without reference to learners' purposes.

**3.3. Materials and communicative tasks**

The third element is the selection or development of materials that support the identified outcomes. Bocanegra-Valle (2010) highlights the need to evaluate and design materials in relation to ESP classroom requirements. Nickerson (2018) discusses language in workplace contexts, which reinforces the value of examining how communication is shaped by its setting and purpose.

For military English instruction, teachers may consider carefully selected and appropriately adapted texts, audio materials, dialogues, forms of report, instructions, and presentations. Materials must be lawful to use, suitable for the learners' level, and approved where institutional rules require it. Publicly available general materials can be adapted to practise transferable communication skills without including restricted, operational, or sensitive information.

Activities may include pair-work information gaps, role-plays, listening for key information, reading for specific details, summarizing a short text, giving a structured update, and writing a brief factual report. These tasks allow learners to practise language functions such as describing, clarifying, sequencing, comparing, reporting, and responding. The aim is not to teach terminology in isolation but to develop the ability to use language appropriately for a communicative purpose.

Genre-based instruction can support this work. Hyland (2007) explains that genres are connected to communicative purposes and recurring textual conventions. In a course for cadets, teachers might use accessible examples of descriptions, instructions, summaries, or reports to help learners notice how information is organized and expressed. The materials should be adapted to the course level and should not reproduce confidential or operational documents.



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**3.4. Assessment aligned with communicative purposes**

The fourth element is assessment. Cumming (2001) examines whether writing assessment practices reflect specific or general purposes, while O'Sullivan (2012) discusses assessment issues in Languages for Specific Purposes. Together, this literature supports the principle that assessment design should be considered in relation to the intended language-use context.

A balanced assessment plan for an ESP course may combine conventional language measures with performance tasks. For example, vocabulary and grammar checks can assess aspects of language knowledge, while a short presentation, information-exchange task, listening task, or written summary can provide evidence of communicative performance. Possible criteria include task completion, clarity, organization, comprehensibility, appropriate vocabulary, grammatical control, and interaction.

Assessment criteria should be shared with learners in advance and should match the learning outcomes. Formative feedback can help learners identify specific areas for improvement, while end-of-course tasks can provide an overall indication of progress. The exact weighting and task types should be decided locally.

The analysis therefore suggests a four-stage planning framework:

**1. Needs analysis: identify learner profiles, language gaps, and relevant target tasks.**

**2. Course design: translate the evidence into realistic learning outcomes and a course sequence.**

**3. Materials and instruction: select or adapt suitable materials and provide practice through purposeful communication tasks.**

**4. Assessment and review: evaluate learning against the outcomes and use the evidence to improve the course.**

**4. Discussion**

The proposed framework brings together established ESP principles in a way that may be useful for military English instruction. Its main implication is that course planning should begin with the purposes for which learners need English, rather than with a predetermined list of specialist vocabulary. This distinction is important because professional communication involves selecting and organizing information, understanding others, and responding appropriately, as well as knowing terminology.

First, needs analysis can help teachers make more informed decisions about priorities. Military cadets should not automatically be treated as a homogeneous group. Their previous English learning, proficiency, academic demands, and anticipated communication tasks may differ. A local needs analysis can therefore help prevent a mismatch between course content and learner requirements. It can also help institutions decide which needs can realistically be addressed within the available course time.

Second, alignment among needs, outcomes, materials, and assessment can improve the coherence of instruction. If a course outcome is to summarize information clearly, learners should have opportunities to practise summarizing, receive feedback on that task, and be assessed using criteria related to it. This alignment is consistent with the broader ESP emphasis on purposeful course design (Woodrow, 2018).

Third, materials should be professionally relevant but pedagogically accessible. Authenticity alone does not guarantee effective learning. A text may be authentic but too difficult, too specialized, or unsuitable for the learners' current level. Teachers may therefore need to adapt the length, vocabulary load, task instructions, and amount of support. In military settings, they must also follow institutional rules and avoid using restricted or sensitive material. Public, non-sensitive content can provide opportunities to practise transferable skills such as giving explanations, reporting information, and asking for clarification.



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Fourth, assessment should provide evidence of both language knowledge and the ability to complete communicative tasks. A grammar test may be appropriate for checking selected language features, but it cannot by itself show whether a learner can organize a short oral report or understand key information in a spoken message. A combination of assessment methods is therefore preferable when it is feasible and aligned with the course objectives (Cumming, 2001; O'Sullivan, 2012).

The framework is conceptual and has not been tested with cadets. It should not be interpreted as evidence that a particular ESP intervention has already improved learners' performance. Further research could begin with a needs analysis in a military educational institution, followed by the development of a pilot course and an evaluation using appropriate pre-course and post-course measures, learner feedback, and performance-based tasks. Such research would help determine which elements of the framework are most relevant in a particular institutional context.

**5. Conclusion**

This paper has examined how principles of English for Specific Purposes can inform English language instruction in military education. The literature-based analysis identified four connected elements for planning a professionally oriented course: needs analysis, goal-oriented course design, context-sensitive materials and communicative activities, and assessment aligned with learning outcomes.

The proposed four-stage framework offers a practical starting point for teachers and course designers. It emphasizes that military English instruction should be based on verified learner needs and institutional objectives, while maintaining an appropriate balance between general language development and professional communication practice. The framework is a conceptual proposal rather than an empirically validated model. Future research should investigate cadets' actual language needs and evaluate the framework through classroom-based studies.

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