

English for Diplomacy; Designing a Course for Spokesmen of Ministries in Regional Government/Iraqi Kurdistan

Momen Yaseen M.Amin^{[a],*}

^[a]Department of International Relations, Soran University, Soran, Kurdistan Region, Iraq.

* Corresponding author.

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Abstract

This paper describes the design of a course of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) – English for Diplomacy for spokesmen of ministries in Iraqi Kurdistan, which English for them is foreign language not second and knowing this language is crucial. The development of the course and its transformation into the syllabus as English for Diplomacy reflects the changing demands of ministries of Kurdistan Regional Government and the growing interest in both ESP and public policy matters in this region. This project aims to identify the occupational English language needs of diplomats whose second language (L2) is not English and English for them is foreign language. It consists of two sections; First, I describe the context or situation that language program will be carried out (“environment analysis”). Then, explain and exemplify clearly the needs analysis, and states clearly the ideology/principles that reflect in this design, and plans of the goals and learning outcomes/objectives. In section two, attaches a sample unit/module with the teaching materials, exercises, etc., reflecting what was planned in Section one.

Key words: Course design; ESP; English for diplomacy; Iraqi Kurdistan

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INTRODUCTION

English is a key international language for inter-governmental relations, for NGOs and for public bodies of

many different types. The ability to contribute to meetings and debates, chair meetings, persuade people to your point of view is an essential tool for Diplomats, Government Representatives, Ministers, Members of Parliament, Civil Servants, Spokesmen, and those on international working parties – among many others. Also English is one of the most frequently used international languages for occupational purposes. For this reason, employers from various fields often seek to employ people who are good at using English to fulfill their job-related duties. The need for such workers is increasingly high especially in institutions which have international connections. Embassies, consulates and ministries of foreign affairs in particular pay great attention to their officials’ English skills as these institutions conduct multilateral international relations. In this context, English trainings, either in-service or provided by private English courses, try to cover the most suitable content and approaches to allow the attendees to improve their language abilities. For this purpose of designing an effective English course, determining the occupational language needs of the workers and designing appropriate courses in line with these language needs should be priorities.

English for Diplomacy Purposes (EDP) is one of the branches of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). EDP is a relatively new branch of ESP compared to English for Academic Purposes (EAP). EDP aims to determine and meet the occupational needs of learners whose profession requires them to be good at English in order to be efficient in their jobs. Through different data collection instruments, the needs of the employees can be determined and English Language Teaching (ELT) experts can therefore develop relevant language programs. Learners’ needs can be investigated efficiently by doing a comprehensive and formal needs analysis. Through a needs analysis, program developers can detect the learners’ needs and design proper curricula for the people in an EDP program.

Diplomacy is one of those professions in which English is used in conducting international relations, performing relevant office work and in negotiating. It is necessary to define diplomats' occupational English needs in order to help them to improve their proficiency in occupational English. Such a goal may be achieved through designing an appropriate language program for diplomats to be applied in an in-service training or in a private English course.

The aim of this work is to show the needs of spokesmen of KRG ministries for English as foreign language, and approaches for applying the course to them, to be able to use more appropriate diplomatic language during their negotiations, especially when resolving conflict. This project therefore was conducted to explore and determine the place and importance of English in diplomacy, particular English language skills required by diplomats to perform their duties as well as the job-related and daily-life activities conducted in English that are frequently used in the profession.

The status of English in Iraqi Kurdistan

English Language learning as an obligatory skill in Iraqi Kurdistan (an autonomous region in north of Iraq) dates back to the period of its fast opening to the outside world and undergoing great development. The regional government started to reconstruct and reform the educational system of English Language Teaching and Learning in the Kurdistan Region. This movement offered using a newly introduced English Language course book, namely Sunrise. (Amin, 2017)

These days English language is regarded as an international language and hundred-millions of people on the world are using it as a means of communication (Amin, 2017; Amin, 2019). Regarding this fast-growing use, Asian and Middle East countries are seeking the ways to the improve peoples' communicative ability in English as their foreign language (Zughoul, 2003, p.111; Amin, 2020). In the educational system of Iraqi Kurdistan Region, there are still serious problems for students in using English language for communication at secondary and high schools. In Kurdistan Region students are required to learn English language integrated skills especially speaking to encourage them in having communications and interactions with international residents. Therefore, Iraqi Kurdistan government in (2007) concluded to offer a new program of English language which is (Sunrise) for basic schools that considered four integrated skills.

Since 2007 that KRG has taken significant policy of improving educational standards, English language is being presented to early stages of learning and creative thinking styles of learning is considered and incorporated into school curricula. (Amin, 2017; Amin, 2018; Amin, 2019). This new curriculum was officially introduced on the website of (Sunrise for Kurdistan) and it was introduced as a complete English written course especially for primary and secondary school students. (Amin, 2020)

SECTION ONE

This section describes the background and the context of the course, identifies main needs of the course and analyzes those needs, and states clearly the principles which are would reflect in this design, and plans the goals and learning outcomes/objectives.

1. ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS

Iraqi Kurdistan is the autonomous region of Iraq. It borders the Kurdish regions of Iran to the east, Turkey to the north, and Syria to the west. The regional capital is Erbil. The region is parliamentary democracy with a regional assembly that consists of 111 seats and 19 ministries in Kurdistan Regional Government KRG, The four governorates of Duhok, Hawler, Silemani, and Halabja, have a population of around 6.000.000 million in 2014. The official language is simply identified as "Kurdish", and Spoken languages, are, Kurdish, Arabic (historical ties with Iraq), Persian and English (understood in the major cities). Before the establishment of the KRG in 1991, primary and secondary education was almost entirely taught in Arabic. Higher education was always taught in Arabic. This however changed with the establishment of the Kurdistan autonomous region. The first international school opened its branch in Iraqi Kurdistan in 2006. Other international schools have opened in 2011. Kurdistan's official universities are University of Sulaimanyah, Salahaddin, Dohuk, Raparin, Halabja, and, etc.

The learner of this course, are spokesmen of ministries of KRG, Their age is from 28-35 years old, they are all graduated BA or MA from colleagues of Human Sciences especially Department of Media or the related colleges to their ministries. For example; spokesman of Ministry of Financial Resources graduated MA from college of Accounting and Bank. However, Spokesmen of ministries of Education, Higher Education, Agriculture, and Culture graduated from Media. So their proficiency level is somehow different but they are in their first year of job as in 2014 after parliamentary election the new ministers started their job with their staff.

The instructor or teacher of the course can be a native speaker from Cambridge College in Erbil which was opened in June 2008.

Regarding the situation of the course, one of the significant settings for us is time, as the learners have limited time, they have to be on their job at 8:00 am to 3:00 pm from Sunday to Thursday, as in our context by law the weekend holiday is in Friday and Saturday. So, in order to find best time for them, we have to focus on Evening session, it mean five-days a week From 4:30 pm to 6:30 , two hours. The course takes neo months or 4 weeks, and the place will be on the meeting halls in Ministry of culture in Erbil city.

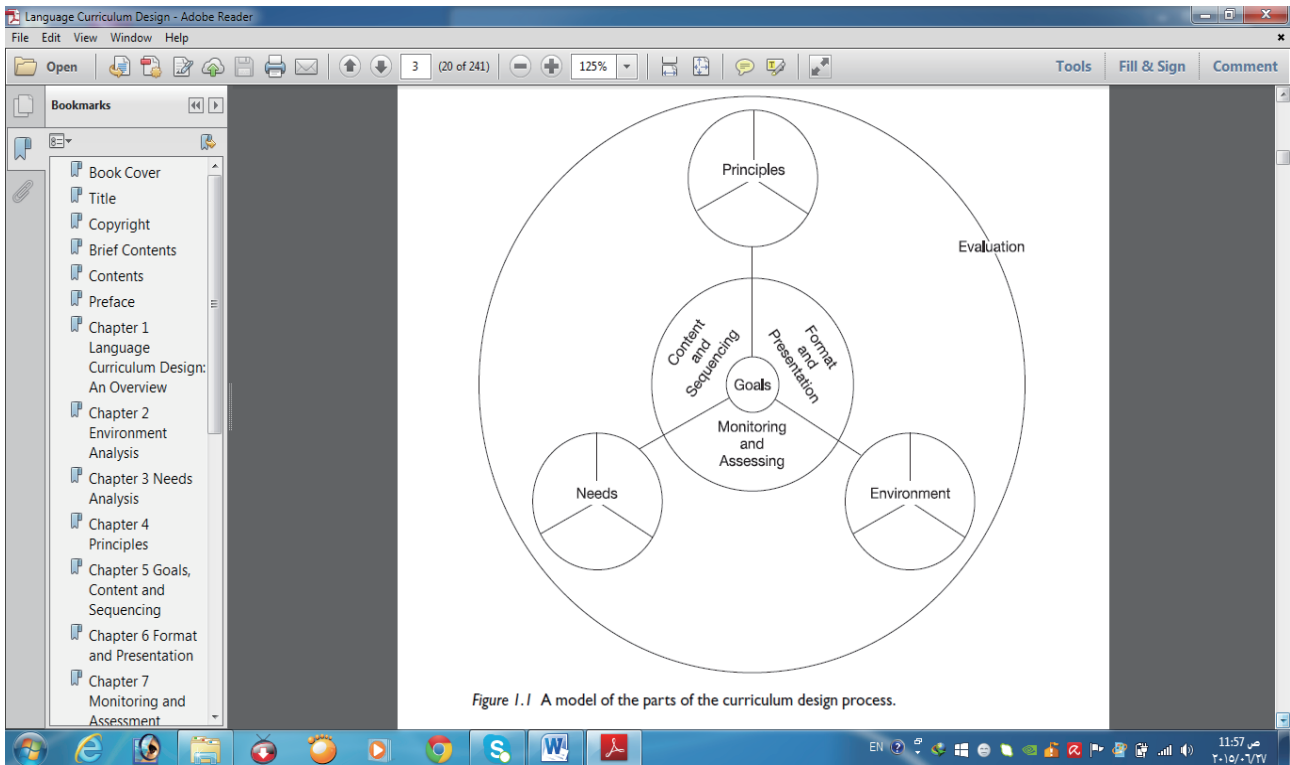


Figure 1.1 A model of the parts of the curriculum design process.

Figure 1
A model of curriculum design process. (Nation & Macalister, 2010)

2. NEEDS ANALYSIS

Richards (2001) defines needs as the difference between what a language learners can now do and what the learner is supposed to be able to do.

Needs are also described in a number of dichotomies or spectrums, such as objective and subjective (Brindley, 1989).

Nation and Macalister (2010) followed Hutchinson and Waters (1987) division of needs into target needs (i.e. what the learner needs to do in the target situation) and learning needs (i.e. what the learner needs to do in order to learn). The analysis of target needs can look at:

Necessities

In this course the suggestion is on learning English for spokesmen of 19 ministries in KRG who are; responsible to attend press-conferences, write and read official statements, participate in international conferences, take part in interviews, and write and publish quarterly reports.

Lacks

This course aims to focus on the language specialized in a particular job, and they cover the language skills to enable learners to perform satisfactorily in an occupational setting (West, 1984). Their needs in terms of basic skills namely, reading, writing, listening and speaking, were stated as equally important and the spokesmen connected their needs with their workplace requirements such as writing statements, keeping notes, speaking in press-conferences, listening to journalists, and use appropriate vocabularies in writing quarterly reports.

Wants

Berwick (1989), Nunan (1988) and Jordan (1997) argue that wants and expectations from a language program can refer to what learners think they need, what they feel about language learning, learners' ideas and expectations regarding a language program.

Wants are described as "what the learners think they need" (Nation, 2000, p. 2). From the previous studies on what exactly diplomats wants in learning English as second or foreign language, it can be found that, they want English language for their communication, responding telephones, emails, and interviews. Also they wish to have enough language to cope with those challenges and influences faced in their job.

3. PRINCIPLES

Nation and Macalister (2010) categorized principle into twenty principles; the principles described here are based on a pedagogical perspective, focusing on curriculum design and teacher training. This course which is English for diplomacy or occupational purposes is designed for the wants and necessities of spokesmen of ministries in KRG, so the most significant principle is their beliefs to organize this course, i.e., they believe that they need their course.

Regarding the first category (Content and sequencing) of the principles, this course provides the best possible coverage of language in use through the inclusion of items that occur frequently in the language, so that learners get the best return for their learning effort. Also, the course

trains learners in how to learn a language. A part from that, as can be seen in section two learners of the course have increasingly spaced, repeated opportunity to give attention to wanted items in a variety of contexts. And the language focus of this course needs to be on generalizable features of the language system in terms of vocabulary, structure, and discourse. This course is practical one and it helps the learners to make the most effective use of previous knowledge.

For the second category (Format and presentation), as Nation and Macalister (2010) demonstrated, in this course the learners interested and excited about learning the language, Also the course includes balance of the four strands of meaning-focused input, language-focused learning, meaning-focused output and fluency activities. The course provides activities aimed at increasing the fluency with which the learners can use the language they already know, both receptively and productively. And also the course helped learners to use their language in both speaking and writing. The course includes language-focused learning in the sound system, vocabulary, grammar and discourse areas. The instructor of the course is native speaker so; all of the sessions are focused on English as the only language for the course. And the course processes the items to be learned as deeply and as thoughtfully as possible. The course presents how the learners have the most favorable attitudes to the language, users of the language, use of the language. Finally, the course provides opportunity for learners to work with the learning material in ways that most suit their individual learning style.

Thirdly, in terms of (monitoring and assessment), the assessment of the material in a language course bases on a careful consideration of the learners and their needs, Also, Learners should receive helpful feedback which will allow them to improve the quality of their language.

4. GOALS

This course aims to help learners (spokesmen of ministries in KRG), to be more confident when using English in a diplomatic setting in order to help create a professional representation of their ministries. And to develop the language to chair, participate in and conduct meetings and discussions in an international environment. Also help them to be able to use more appropriate diplomatic language during negotiations. Also guide them to make clearer, more effective speeches and presentations on a wide range of topics. And to develop their language used when socializing and entertaining foreign guests. Finally, to help them to write clear and concise emails, reports, and cope press-conferences and meetings.

5. CONTENT AND SEQUENCING

The mainly focus of this course is on speaking and listening skills, as the learners need this skills more than writing and reading.

The content of the course makes the learners interested and motivated in their study of the language. It encourages normal language use. It makes learning easier.

Table 1
Matrix model

	Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4
Item 1	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4
Item 2	Lesson 5	Lesson 6	Lesson 7	Lesson 8
Item 3	Lesson 9	Lesson 10	Lesson 11	Lesson 12
Item 4	Lesson 13	Lesson 14	Lesson 15	Lesson 16

The content helps in the learner's job. It develops awareness of another culture or cultures. It also promotes international understanding and it may encourage learners to accept the norms and values of other cultures. The content maintains and supports the learners' own culture. The content helps learners develop intellectually by making them aware of important and challenging ideas. The content of the course meets the expectations of the learners and their parents.

Regarding the sequencing of the content of this course, we follow matrix model and which one unit of progression is systematically varied against another, so that the same items are met with different contexts.

6. FORMAT AND PRESENTATION

As mentioned previously, the focus of this course is much more on speaking and listening, the format of the course follows four strands that Nation and Macalister (2010) suggested.

Meaning-Focused Input

Meaning-focused input involves having the opportunity to learn from listening and speaking. Krashen (1981) would call it learning from comprehensible input.

The course provides CD for the learners to be the listening equivalent of such a course. Learners can listen while they read, or read first and listen later. The instructor asks the learners to control the speed of the input by asking the speaker to speak more slowly. Also it focuses on the negotiation. Also it applies the "time on task" principle.

Meaning-Focused Output

Meaning-focused output involves learning through speaking and writing. Learning by input alone is not sufficient because the knowledge needed to comprehend input does not include all the knowledge which is needed to produce output. This course spends about one quarter of the course time on meaning-focused speaking and writing. It also considers conversations which have a largely social focus. It focuses on the message.

Language-Focused Learning

Although learners of this course who are spokesmen of the

ministries in KRG mainly focus on speaking and listening, they demand to use good and rich language in response emails, write reports or statements. So Language-focused learning involves a deliberate focus on language feature such as pronunciation, spelling, word parts, vocabulary, collocations, grammatical constructions and discourse features.

Fluency Development

As learners of this course are somehow beginner of learning English this strand might not be very much focused on. Nation and Macalister (2010) demonstrated that fluency involves making the best use of what is already known.

The most important principle to consider in presentation is the provision of a balance of learning opportunities across the four strands of meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning and fluency development. The most important job of the language instructor of this course is planning, and the second most important kind of planning is to provide a balance of opportunities for learning across the four strands. The course focuses on classroom activities several types.

7. MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

The aim of the monitoring and assessment is to make sure that the learners will get the most benefit from the course.

Nation and Macalister (2010) showed major types of monitoring and assessment; Placement assessment, the aim of this testing is to ensure that the course is not going to be too easy or too difficult for the learner. Observation of learning, while the course is running, the activities that the learners do are carefully monitored. Short-term achievement assessment, the learners may be monitored to see what they are learning from the course. And diagnostic assessment, in order to plan a program, it is useful to know where learners' strengths and weaknesses lie and where there are gaps in their knowledge.

Our course is private one for spokesmen of ministries in KRG, so the placement assessment is not required and useful, but the course clearly follows other assessment.

8. EVALUATION

As mentioned this course is private course, so evaluation for the course and learners is not much useful, However, regarding the steps of evaluation, if the fund of the course which might be (Ministry of Culture of KRG) asks the instructor to evaluate the course, he has to follow some steps such as; Find how much time and money are available to do the evaluation, and decide what kinds of information will be gathered.

The instructor follows self-report scales by asking them to participate in questionnaire, or observing learners by checklist.

SECTION TWO

This section considers the syllabus for the course that we have already designed for spokesmen of 19 ministries in Kurdistan Regional Government in north of Iraq. As we mentioned previously the course is one month or 4 weeks, each week 5 days on Sunday to Thursday, every day two hours, it mean totally the course consist of 40 hours.

The appropriate syllabus for this course consists of 3+1 units, each unit consists of 4 tasks for each skill; writing, reading, listening and speaking task.

First Week

Unit One, Lesson one, Lesson two, Lesson three, and Lesson four:

a). Listening: (i) listening for general understanding and specific points to remember: The instructor plays CD and asks learners to listen, and He/she asks them to fill blanks

b). Speaking: (i) asking for clarification: From the listening to the CD the learner interest and speak with instructor or colleagues for clarification.

c). Reading: (i) reading handouts and board: The instructor chooses a passage from the political issues and shows them types of reading (skimming and scanning), and also asks them to read and underline words, then search for their meaning and their synonyms and collocations.

The instructor clarifies and identifies strategies for reading task and from the passage asks learners to answer (Wh and Yes/No) questions. Also asks them to write vocabularies in their notebook.

d). Writing: (i) taking notes that can be re-constituted: The instructor identifies and clarifies strategies for writing essays, (descriptive essays), as the learners of this course need this type of writing when they have to write statements.

In Lesson five, of unit one, which is last day of first week, the instructor reviews the previews lessons of unit one, in writing, reading, listening and speaking tasks.

Second Week

Unit One, Lesson one, Lesson two, Lesson three, and Lesson four:

a). Listening: listening to and following instructions and explanations of problems. The instructor plays a CD of press-conference of a famous president which journalists ask him different questions, and asks learners to watch and listen to it.

b). Speaking: making suggestions, oral presentations of work, and discussion. The instructor asks learners to discuss the press-conference that they have already watched.

c). Reading: following instructions. (skimming and scanning), The instructor read second passage for learners regarding a cultural issue which is clear for learners, then clarifies and identifies strategies for reading task and from

the passage asks learners to answer (Wh and Yes/No) questions. Also asks them to write vocabularies in their notebook.

d). Writing: writing reports, and writing instructions.

The instructor identifies and clarifies strategies for problem solution essays, as the learners of this course need this type of writing when they have to write reports; describe problems and identify solutions.

In Lesson five, of unit one, which is last day of first week, the instructor reviews the previews lessons of unit one, in writing, reading, listening and speaking tasks.

Third Week

Unit One, Lesson one, Lesson two, Lesson three, and Lesson four:

a). Listening: The instructor organizes a task which each learner have to speak on the stage and present a short press-conference, and ask his/her colleagues to listen to him/her carefully.

b). Speaking: After finishing each presentation or each press-conference of the learner, the instructor focuses on discussion and comments on the activity.

c). Reading: reading intensively. The instructor gives learners a statement (e.g. statement of white house) and gives them types of reading (skimming and scanning), and asks them to identify the main parts of it, introduction, these statement, support ideas, and conclusion. Also asks them to write vocabularies in their notebook.

d). Writing: note taking, selecting and organizing information for reports and essays, describing theories, practices and trends, writing evaluative reports/essays on theories, practices and procedures. The instructor focuses on graphs, tables, and pie charts and shows strategies of analyzing them to learners.

Fourth Week

In this week the instructor has only 10 hour to review what he/she taught in previous weeks, especially speaking and writing tasks. He/she evaluate learners in a exam, which consist of reading, vocabulary, and writing. In other way, speaking task by show them pictures and ask them to describe pictures and discuss their opinions.

The instructor in last hours gives learners questionnaire and open-ended questions to evaluate his/her course, how much they got benefit in this course, what are the problems of the course, what are learners' recommendations and suggestions for next courses.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, a course design suggested, and a syllabus for the course provided, so as to be appropriate course for the learners who are spokesmen of 19 ministries in Kurdistan Regional Government in north of Iraq. The implication of this design is to identify and analyze needs, principles, goals, and environmental constraints of such courses which can be done in English for Diplomatic Purposes

(EDP) as a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). One of the constraints of this course and such other courses will be time management. As these participants have limited time and the course must be short and useful and time management can be seen as one of the limitations of such courses.

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