

## Appraisal and Hints on “Career Paths” Series, Esp Engineering Books Developed at Put of Tirana

**Prof.As Fatmir Vrapı**

Polytechnic University of Tirana

**Edita Frashëri**

PHD, Polytechnic University of Tirana

### Abstract

The moment you settle down to write and travel into the ESP world, ESP book-series, you are apt to encounter and get startled from the most commonly used “ESP words”, such as ESP course, students’ needs, study skills, language skills and many more. But the scope of academic debate and appraisal on ESP domain and textbooks exceeds and runs beyond the range of technical terms and technicalities. Like the ESP evolving world, ESP University Teachers are frequently puzzled and empowered by the genuine question and fact whether they are sufficiently qualified and technically competent to teach in ESP courses. This paper reviews points of appraisal and hints arising from the adoption and teaching situations in a “technical university media”, like Polytechnic University of Tirana. In view of the above, we strive to highlight and pinpoint at certain moments of teaching and learning experiences together with the outcomes. Similarly, through this paper we try to introduce several additional steps and specific hints with the focus on a more detailed picture and manner, by regarding these textbooks in an evaluative approach, and practically integrated skills; because ESP teachers need to develop and display a pioneering spirit of teaching activities and practice, into the ESP Realm.

**Keywords:** ESP books, ESP teachers, integrated skills, language skills, teaching and learning outcomes, technical skills

### Introduction

Over the last twenty-five years or so, ELT in general and ESP Teaching in particular, have had an outstanding development, special performance and constantly widespread progress in Albania, more precisely in the Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Levels of Education. This process has been also sustained by the institutional framework from the Ministry of Education to further enhance the progressive development of English and other languages within the country’s goal for joining the European Union by striving to implement insights from the Common European Framework for Languages, (CEF). Following the trends of development for Languages in Albania, the Department of Foreign Languages, at PUT, now the Centre of Foreign Languages since 1912 has tried to pursue the right policies, by adopting and implementing the best practices of teaching and learning into our Curricula and programmes at PUT Faculties. The language programmes and materials production for ESP have been frequently changed and remodeled in the course of these years, at times not feasibly responding to specific needs and requirements of our Students. More recently, in the last three years we have accomplished a more specific work and focus onto the ESP teaching at PUT. It has been attempted to better target and evaluate our students needs and requirements; the problem has been handled from a multi-leveled-approach: the process has covered and developed not only the preparation and provision of specifically based textbooks, but also participation and academic education of teachers through courses, seminars, conferences etc. up to the preparation, compilation and defense of dissertation theses in ESP Domain (five PUT English teachers became PH Doctors by Degree over the last three years)

Similarly, the design and organization of ESP Courses at PUT, the assessment and evaluation of the process based on students targeted- needs, led us to take up several concrete steps for the application and teaching at PUT of Career Path Series, mainly Engineering Text Books, which became our user-friendly books of first preference and choice among other published English Text-Series.

## Career Paths in Engineering Faculties

ESP Textbooks for engineering students, within the Career Paths Series by Express Publishing are specifically designed and produced by highly reputable authors like, Virginia Evans, Charles Lloyd, James Frazier, Jenny Dooley, Joshua Kern, Carl Taylor etc. The methodology being employed in designing Career Paths, seems to be learning-centered with interactive and communicative practices to be applied in classroom-settings and auditoriums.

Career Paths, "Engineering" by Charles Lloyd and James Frazier (most widely applied into the Faculties of PUT), provides current engineering students and professionals with all they need, to effectively perform in an English working environment. With specific technical terms and contextualized situations, every unit displays step by step approaches and instruction which lead students towards the four major components/skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing.

The book is arranged into three levels of difficulty by offering 400 vocabulary terms and phrases. The unit contains a text of entry comprehension, vocabulary and listening skills which lead students to written and oral production activities. The text includes a variety of authentic passages, career specific dialogues with more than 45 readings and listening passages per Textbook.

There are also guided speaking and writing exercises with a complete glossary of terms and phrases. Similarly, the teacher's book contains a full answer key and audio scripts, the audio CDs contain all recorded material in British and American English. Career Paths, "Engineering" Text (containing Books 1-2-3) are also rated for their levels within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, A1,A2, B1. Other Textbooks, in use or to be used from Career Paths by Express Publishing at PUT for the First Cycle of Studies, Bachelor Level of Students, are as follows:

- |                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1)English for Mechanical Engineering | 5)English for Information Technology |
| 2)English for Civil Engineering      | 6)English for Architecture           |
| 3)English for Electrical Engineering | 7)English for Mechanics              |
| 4)English for Computer Engineering   | 8)English for Electronics            |

ESP is similarly developed and extended for application into the Second Cycle of Studies (Master) in relation to specific professional fields; hence, we have introduced at the Second Cycle of Studies at UPT , Master Level of Students, certain Titles by Express Publishing House like:

- 1)**Finance** for Actuarial Science Master
- 2) **Accountancy** for Numerical Analysis Master
- 3)**Environment** for Environmental Master etc

While adopting and applying any new textbooks, the course evaluator/instructor has to undertake certain evaluative steps and inquire further into the Discourse Analysis of the matter; i.e. as Widdowson states, whether that "Discourse seems to be the communicative competence" to refer both to "what a text producer meant by a text" and "what a text means to the receiver" (student). Presumably, to delve deep into the values of text evaluation and discourse analysis, we have to closely examine parties "on site", the internal and external stakeholders , range of issues at all levels with students, teachers, managing staff and alike, including ESP Books and materials. But, how to evaluate ESP materials?! According to Hutchison & Waters 1993, (English for Specific Purposes, 96-105), an ESP Research Evaluator has to ascertain certain specific criteria based on objective and subjective analysis and then matching the real needs of the students; in that case, the audience in the auditoriums, professionals in the study field with the specific aims and targeted requirements. In view of the assumptions above, questionnaires, surveys, discussions and forums were conducted and arranged with students and teachers, including several descriptive articles and theoretical research studies conclusions. A simple questionnaire was conducted with 15 students from Mathematics and Physics Engineering Faculty, who were selected through sampling method; namely from Actuarial Science Master Group, Second Cycle of Studies and the text "**Finance**" from Career Paths was chosen; A background simulation in classroom was offered in descriptive terms and orientation, so as to better address such questions. Questions run as follows and figures in table 1:

1. In term of percentage/by degree of importance, could you list down the four major skills used in the book "**Finance**"

2. Which other activities and practices you find interesting and attractive to be represented and improved? Comment upon them.

The following table displays the four skills rated in percentage (15 students in total, pondered on average ratings)

**Table 1 Skills in % and comments on Finance from Career Paths**

Skills	Present in Textbook in %	Would like to be in Textbook in %
Reading	35%	40%
Listening	25%	15%
Writing	20%	15%
Speaking	15%	20%
Other	5 %	10%

**NOTES AND COMMENTS**

Presenting other skills	Notes on "Wants"
Oral/written Presentations Graph descriptions	Longer Readings
Discussions and debating forums	Longer Speaking/dialogues
Note-taking and presenting integrated skills	Grammar points/issues
Writing a specific report/statement	How to write a scientific paper, how to write an article, letters, CV, Emails etc

A simply-structured questionnaire was also arranged with 10 English Teachers from PUT Faculties in relation to the fundamental text applied from the Career Paths, "**Engineering**";

1. How much of your expectations in teaching situations/outcomes in auditoriums were realized by using the major skills and other activities?

**Table 2.1 Expectations from ESP teachers on Engineering TextBooks from Career Paths**

Very high	High	Average	Low	Very low
5	2	2	1	-

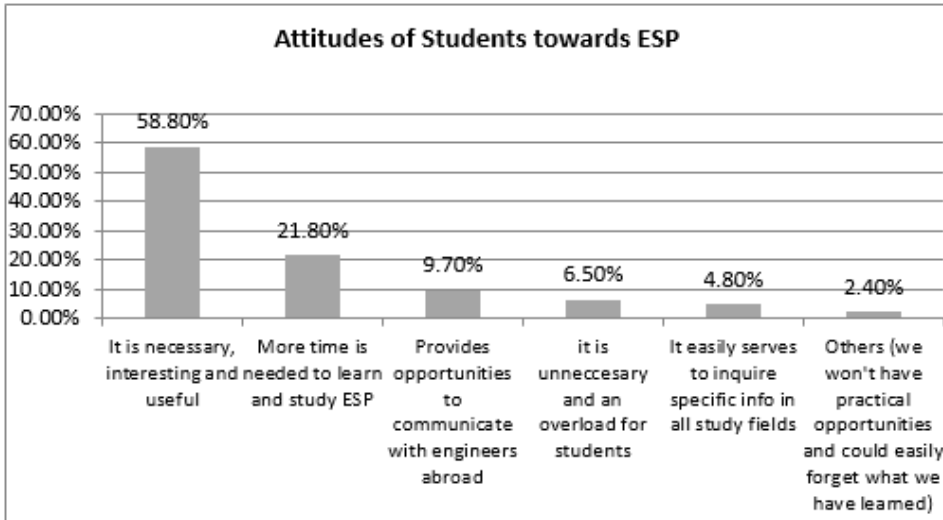
2. How have the four skills been represented and other hints with practices for improvement?

**Table 2.2 Expectations from ESP teachers on Engineering Text Book from Career Paths**

Hints for Improvements by Teachers	
1. Longer reading passages 2. Grammar extended explanations 3. Longer graphs/picture descriptions 4. Pre-reading activities 5. More Communicative activities	6. More well-structured speaking practices 7. Writing presentations/reports 8. Oral presentations 9. Writing specific papers and articles 10. Innovative platform system for the future

From another questionnaire on "**Engineering Textbook**", from Career Paths, was arranged by A. Brahja in her Research Study entitled, "English Teaching and Acquisition of English Vocabulary for Specific Purposes, Doctorate Thesis defended in 2016, The open questionnaire which consisted in comparing the theoretical knowledge and information with practical implications, was developed with 144 students. The sample consisted of students from Architecture and Urban Planning, First Cycle of Studies, Bachelor Level, at PUT, during the academic years 2013-2014, 2015-2016. Two Textbooks, **Architecture** by Virginia Evans, Jenny Dooley and Dave Cook and **Engineering** by Charles Lloyd and James Frazier, were taught during the First Semester, with 5 teaching classes a week, at Bachelor Level; the students in this Faculty acquire and possess an optimum level of acquisition in General English. Hence, there is a smooth move and guaranteed progress through the academic years, into the ESP studies, specifically into the English Textbooks Studies for Engineers. The following graph, table 3. shows the attitude interpreted via percentages based on opinions, collected from the students.

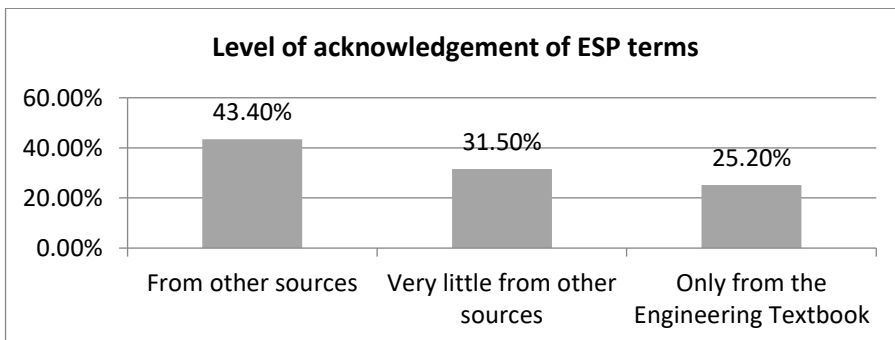
**Table 3 Attitudes of Students towards ESP on Architecture and Engineering Textbooks**



The second Questionnaire completed at FCE was about on how much the **Textbooks on Civil Engineering and Architecture**, help into the use of various techniques for acquisition of technical terms (vocabulary). An open questionnaire was framed accordingly with 267 students from Faculty of Civil Engineering, in Specialties like, Civil Engineering, Environmental Engineering, Geodesy Engineering, and with 124 students from Architecture and Urban planning, Questions were addressed by the end of the First Cycle of Studies, Bachelor, and runs as follows:

- Have you encountered before such ESP terms, like in your Engineering Textbooks?
- Has the text been useful into the vocabulary enrichment and enlargement, relating to your field of study and if yes, in what ways?
- What would you like to improve/adjust in the existing Engineering Textbooks for students, with teaching-learning environment and classroom settings?

**Table 4.1 Level of acknowledgement of ESP terms**



**Table 4.2 Usefulness of Engineering Textbooks into Vocabulary Enrichment**

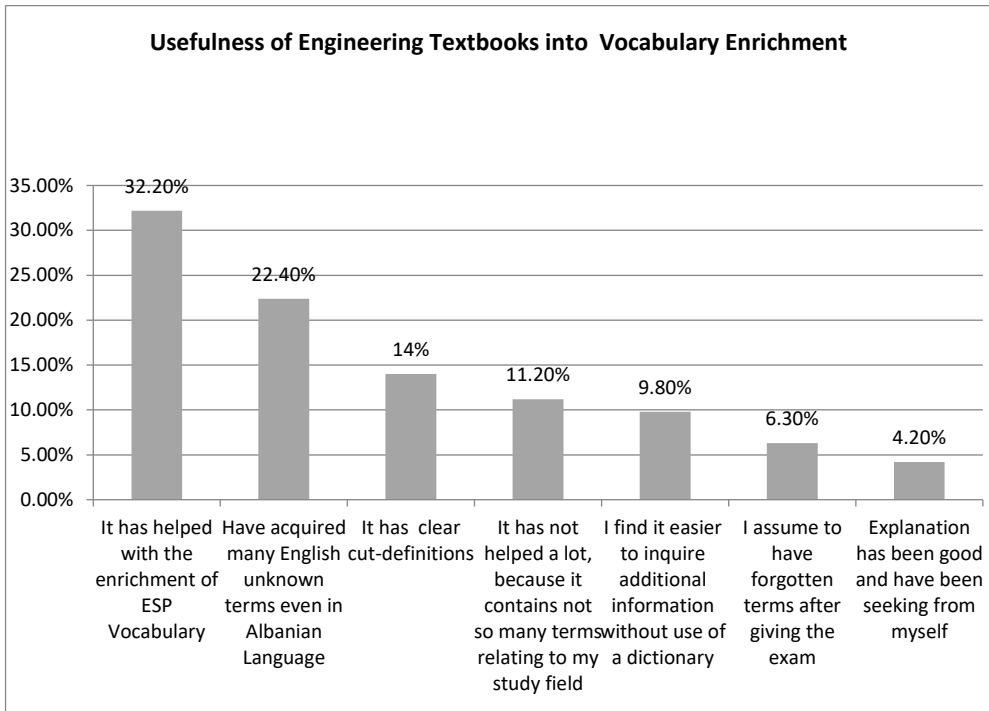
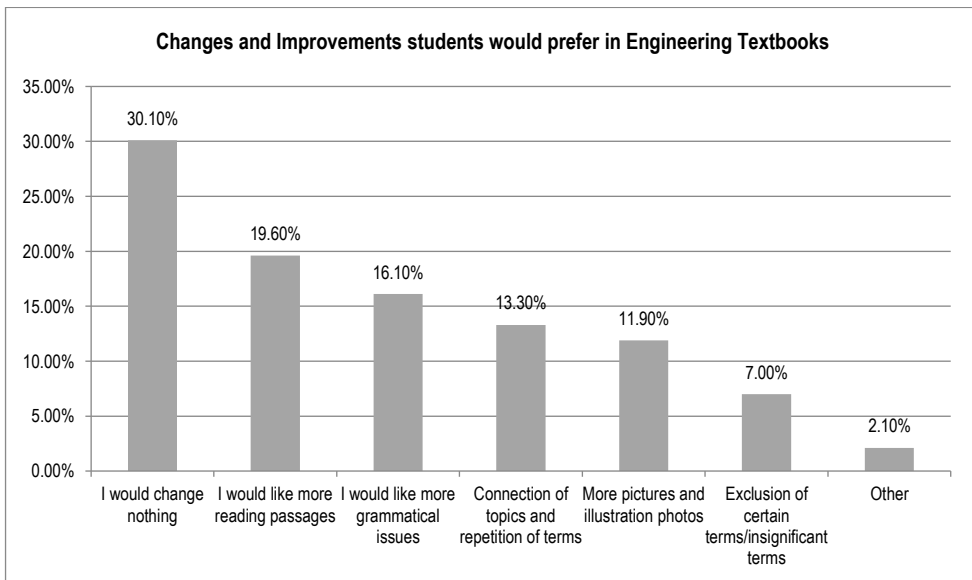


Table 4.3 Changes and Improvements students would prefer in Engineering Textbooks



## Hints and Conclusions

- Through this Paper, some of the ESP Engineering Textbooks from Career Paths by Express Publishing House, were observed and evaluated, not on a thoroughly comprehensive methodology by considering all elements; from criteria to aims and approaches of a text, from specific skills and strategies to topics and practical considerations, from design and organization to pictures, graphs, and illustrations, from language contents to exercise designing process. It would require a commendable work and research efforts translated into only an article for this conference.
- So far, a more direct approach was followed by making use of questionnaires from teaching these ESP Engineering Textbooks at PUT; from teacher's discussions and classroom observations, from articles and research studies of the field by English PUT colleagues
- In general, Career Paths used at PUT, contain a wide range of Engineering Topics which mostly comply with the Branches and Profile Studies in Engineering Faculties of PUT; they provide valuable feedback which increases and enriches the real needs for students and teachers by offering customized material, suitable to every setting and workplace
- Having covered a full range of topics and levels, Career Paths, Engineering Textbooks cater for students, professionals, adult learners and are usually complemented by Student CDs for self-access study, a Teacher's Guide with keys and step by step for a lesson-plan and a Test Booklet.
- Career Paths, Engineering Textbooks included, seem to display a similarly/uniquely owned structure in composition, in their methodology of teaching and learning. Subject Units resemble in form and appearance, while preserving similar graphs and attractive pictures, with full colour for the teaching course books.
- As the Questionnaires were compiled to focus primarily on students and teachers' reactions towards the Engineering Textbooks and materials, it is of practical consideration and significance to notify certain aspects already discerned and evidenced from questionnaires and forums, like "A broader spectrum of topic related points", "A wider view and treatment of certain grammatical clues", "A more practical approach towards integrated skills in order to enhance discussions and forums with the type of proper dialogues", diverting from "copy-paste practices"; lack of Communicative Skills seems to be the most prominent problem with engineering students. At the same time, having the Engineering Textbooks structured and remodeled at a higher level of Studies (B1, B2,C1) with reference to CEF for Languages, would be of substantial values to students and teachers, to English Professionals and Course Designers, to all internal or external stakeholders, be they of primary or secondary significance in ELT or ESP Domain.

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