

Developing Public Managers' English Language Communication Skills – Proposal for a Textbook Design and Evaluation Model

Mirela BARDI¹

Abstract: *Design and evaluation of language teaching materials has given rise to many academic debates about the usefulness of such materials as well as of their role in the professional development of language teachers. Should professionals in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) design their own materials or should they adopt published textbooks? The present study aims to contribute to such debates by proposing a set of materials design and evaluation criteria and arguing that there is a necessary link between the two stages in the process of developing teaching/learning materials. Reflecting on the process of designing an English for Public Administration textbook, an analysis is undertaken based on the criteria that informed the design of the textbook. The outcome of the analysis is an evaluation model that could prove relevant for the professional development of lecturers in ESP and could also inform the design and evaluation of textbooks in other disciplines.*

Keywords: *materials design, evaluation, communication, interaction, professional development*

JEL: *A20; A23; I21.*

Introduction

Language teaching in higher education has seen a lot of changes in recent years, particularly in the area of English for Specific Purposes where many lecturers have been trained in the use of communicative, interactive methodologies. These changes have been outlined in a comprehensive study on the impact of the innovation in teaching ESP that was implemented in Romanian universities starting with the early 1990s (Bardi et al, 1999) and can be summarised as follows:

- focus on the learner and the learning process;
- course and materials development underpinned by extensive needs analysis;
- student involvement in classroom decisions;
- teaching/learning materials with focus on communication;
- extensive range of authentic texts;

¹ Associate Professor PhD, PhD, Faculty of International Business and Economics, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, e-mail: mirela.bardi@rei.ase.ro

- extensive range of real-life, task-based activities;
- approaching grammar teaching through integration of form and meaning;
- integration of language and cognitive skills;
- diverse interaction patterns, including pair and group tasks;
- new roles for teachers and learners.

Such principles that underpin communicative language teaching affect all aspects of the teaching/learning process and are highly interrelated. Student-centred tuition means devolving more responsibility to students for their own learning while the teachers/lecturers undertake a facilitator's role. Course and materials development take into account student needs derived from analysis of real-life or work-related situations in which they have to perform and propose a variety of realistic communication tasks. If classroom work is to help students prepare for accomplishing specific professional activities, then the textbook development and evaluation model proposed in this study should be relevant beyond language teaching and inform teaching/learning materials design in other subject areas. Academics in many fields have shown preoccupation for developing their students' communication skills and have acknowledged the importance of such abilities in classroom and professional interaction (Sabie and Androniceanu, 2012).

Extending this argument, one could claim that language textbook design should address the development of both language and cognitive skills. In a professional communication context, language is used as a resource for the communication of meanings and therefore language competence can be usefully developed through a process that replicates the reality of the target situation. In ESP textbooks, language input is not an end in itself, but an instrument towards achievement of a wider professional aim that essentially refers to appropriate communication of meanings. Therefore, language description needs to be followed by activities that encourage language use and eventually integration of new language in a comprehensive communication activity. Examples of such tasks will be given in section 3 of this paper.

The backdrop of such developments includes the need to foster lifelong learning abilities. Learning to learn has become a parallel curriculum (Claxton, 2002:23). Within a sociocultural approach to 'learning to learn', Claxton (2002) points out that:

'As we learn, we are also changing as learners. ... As we study, so we learn more about what it takes to study and what it means to be a student.' (Claxton 2002:21)

Such a learning-to-learn, or development-oriented curriculum, can only accompany a student-centred approach to teaching/ learning, irrespective of the subject area. In their reflections on the future of education, Wells and Claxton (2002:7) argue that *'the kind of learning that leads development takes place through active participation in purposeful, collaborative activity.'*

The English for Public Administration textbook analysed in this study offers learners opportunities for engagement in purposeful activities of the kind called for by Wells and Claxton. It was designed in order to be used by public administration professionals interested in upgrading their English language communication skills in the wake of European Union accession. Design of this particular textbook was carried out observing a set of criteria informed by the requirements of communicative teaching methodology concerned with the ability to express meanings. The same set of criteria will be used in this study to provide an in-depth evaluation of the textbook. The suggestion will be put forward that analysis and evaluation of teaching/learning materials, irrespective of the field of study, can be usefully conducted by taking into account the pedagogic principles underpinning the design of those materials. The analysis will define further dimensions of the design-guiding criteria, which will hopefully evolve into what might be a feasible textbook evaluation model.

1. ESP textbook design and evaluation criteria – a brief review

ESP teaching is by definition aimed at specific professional groups and is expected to cater for the needs of those groups. Design of teaching/learning language materials has become a complex process, underpinned by comprehensive needs analysis in terms of both target and learning process needs. The language learning syllabi and materials developed as a result tend to be 'multi-layered' (McDonough and Shaw, 1993:47) including topics, skills, structures, functions, roles, etc.

Few teachers would actually embark upon the task of designing their own materials. They would justifiably select and adapt published materials, the more so as they have a wide range of titles to choose from. In many cases, though, there would be no perfect match between the needs of specific groups of students and materials created for a wide category of users. Therefore, adoption of published materials is often followed by adaptation, which requires language lecturers to display both textbook evaluation and textbook design skills.

By asking 'What do we want teaching materials for?', Allwright (1981:5) seems to doubt the usefulness of such materials. He argues that the complexity of the language classroom is too wide to be catered for by a set of materials developed to suit a range of classes.

Therefore, '*learning materials*' are needed, as opposed to teaching materials. Such materials would function as '*guides*' to language learning for students and as '*ideas*' or '*rationale*' books for teachers (1981:16). These ideas are all the more relevant as textbook adaptation is frequently undertaken by language professionals who could benefit from a clear set of guidelines to support their evaluation endeavours.

Textbooks can contribute to expanding the teaching repertoire if they are not followed slavishly but adapted and supplemented with locally designed

materials. When that is the case, textbooks become ‘... *proposals for action, not instructions for use.* (Harmer, 2001). Teachers at the same time adopt, adapt and enrich published materials, in their attempt at providing the best study support for their classes. In the debate about textbook usefulness, I will accept the position of Harwood about textbooks in the field of English for academic purposes that ‘*textbooks can help teachers develop—but only when they are properly based on research, and contain what they should.*’ (2005:156).

Criteria used for evaluation of ESP textbooks tend to be fairly wide and for that reason insufficiently operational. Almagro Esteban (2002) highlights the importance of asking the right questions in the process of textbook analysis and the need for ongoing textbook evaluation to ensure a good match between textbook proposal and students’ needs.

Brunton (2009) uses categories such as context, motivation, appropriateness, methodology, language, to evaluate an ESP textbook for the tourism industry. While the categories themselves are appropriate and can be operational in some contexts, more detailed and principled categories are needed in order to develop an evaluation instrument. Fraidan (2012) uses a more detailed set of categories based on the model of McDonough and Shaw (2003) and generates a descriptive analysis of two business English textbooks that includes features such as authenticity of materials and appropriateness for the level and expectations of students.

Ellis (1997) differentiates between predictive evaluation, which teachers undertake in order to decide what textbooks to use, and retrospective evaluation, to examine materials that have been used. Both types of evaluation are regarded as an action research undertaking which, like most action research efforts, has a strong developmental potential (Allwright 1993).

Pointing out the scarce literature on language textbook evaluation, Sheldon (1988:240) notes that key criteria that inform evaluation schemes naturally depend on the prevailing trends in ‘linguistic fashion.’ Taking this argument further, one could reasonably claim that textbook evaluation criteria should reflect the linguistic and pedagogic ‘fashion’ that informed the design and intended use of a textbook.

1.1 Specific criteria underpinning the design of the English for Public Administration textbook

Evaluation involves criteria and textbook evaluation makes no exception. In the light of the distinction made by Ellis (1997), I would argue that predictive and retrospective evaluations need to be informed by the same set of criteria. The two stages in the ‘life’ of a textbook need to inform each other in the sense that textbook evaluation should be underpinned by the writer’s approach to textbook design.

The criteria that informed the design of the English for Public Administration textbook are described in Table 1. They derive from a

communicative approach to language teaching which gives responsibility to learners and encourages communication of meanings. The evaluation will take the same criteria into account and will highlight more key issues that will be integrated in the proposed model. The description is meant to be a means of operationalising the criteria and make them more transparent for designers and evaluators alike.

Table 1. Textbook design criteria

Criteria	Description
1. Type of syllabus and identification of students' needs	Needs are identified in terms of communication skills and range of functional language, as well as target communication situations or topics
2. Student participation in the learning process	Drawing upon students' background knowledge and ideas, encouraging participation and take over of responsibility for task completion, as well as self-evaluation of progress.
3. Development of communication skills and strategies	Development of specific skills and communicative competencies (Canale 1991) through dedicated or integrated activities.
4. Integrating meaning and form in the study of grammar	A language awareness approach which integrates meaning and form and presents language structures as vehicles for expressing meanings.
5. Types and range of learning tasks and activities	A variety of task-based learning activities designed to encourage communication in real-life situations.
6. Authenticity of texts	Use of texts that students are likely to read for study or professional purposes, using various strategies for personal and professional reasons.
7. Authenticity of tasks	Tasks need to be planned so as the requested output should encourage genuine communication and interaction.
8. Development of learning strategies	Learning materials should encourage the development of language learning and self-development strategies

Developing sets of evaluation criteria requires understanding the approach to materials design – and fundamentally to language teaching – that underlies the writing of a certain teaching resource. The notion of 'washback' as used to describe the relationship between language teaching and language testing (Alderson and Wall, 1993) could be used to describe the relationship of textbook evaluation and textbook design.

A retrospective evaluation also serves as a means of 'testing' the validity of a predictive evaluation, and may point to ways in which the predictive instruments can be improved for future use. (Ellis, 1997:37)

Textbook design is informed by beliefs about teaching and learning and therefore the process of evaluation should apply the same measure as the one that generated the textbook. Thus, textbook evaluation makes sense to the extent it takes into account the principles that informed the design of the textbook.

Apart from the overspread division of language skills into reading, listening, speaking and writing, I believe it is helpful, when designing ESP teaching materials, to take into account the components of communicative competence as described by Canale (1983:6):

- grammatical competence;
- discourse competence;
- sociolinguistic competence;
- strategic competence.

Attention given to these components can generate a wider range of tasks meant to develop all the four types of competence needed by proficient communicators. They cover essential competence areas in relation to all language skills and provide a realistic support for the development of integrated skills activities.

1.2 Meeting students' needs

The drafting of the English for Public Administration textbook was preceded by thorough needs analysis conducted so as to identify both target and learning needs (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). Needs assessment was conducted so as to be learner-centred (attempting to understand learner circumstances, motivation and language learning experience), pragmatic in the sense of enabling the development of a language-specific textbook, and reasonably systematic as regards information collection (Purpura and Graziano-King, 2005).

Target language-use situations were identified through discussions with members of the public administration profession. Based in the Ministry of Home Affairs and Administration, the professionals interviewed were themselves proficient in English, while also aware of the communication needs of civil servants in local and central administration. The group discussion revealed a need for the development of language skills within a highly specific professional context. For instance, vocabulary development had to be approached in conjunction with conceptual clarification of notions 'borrowed' from models of other European public administration systems but not entirely clarified in the local context. The challenge for the textbook designer was to become familiar with the professional 'reality' behind the language, which is a feature of many ESP teaching and materials development situations. Consequently, the textbook designer had to understand the public administration practice in various EU states. Equally, students' presumably considerable professional knowledge could be used as a resource and drawn upon. Such needs generated decisions about the range and type of input and teaching/learning activities to be included in the textbook, training language skills via interesting and relevant content. Although research on public

managers' career progress has shown scarcity of time and resources dedicated to professional development (Androniceanu, 2012), I would argue that well-designed learning tasks can enhance interest and motivation for learning and development.

A potential area of tension was identified in relation to the students' expectations regarding the learning process. The previous language learning experience might have generated expectations about tuition processes and, given the lack of familiarity with communicative methods and longer exposure to teacher-fronted methods, a possible resistance to novelty. Such issues were taken into account and language input boxes with description and explanation of grammar and vocabulary were provided in the student book. In retrospect, there was no rejection of interactive methods because students enjoyed the chance to express opinions regarding professional issues – the more so as most students were experienced civil servants. However, many of them had developed their own learning strategies and had very explicit requests regarding input and process.

The results of the needs analysis indicated the following areas of focus:

- vocabulary development;
- fluency in spoken communication;
- participation in meetings with EU counterparts;
- writing formal documents;
- increased awareness of project management practice and related terminology.

The needs were diverse and called for integration of language and content. Therefore, content and structure-related decisions were made accordingly. In terms of language proficiency, the textbook was designed for intermediate to upper-intermediate level.

The textbook analysis that follows will be structured around the criteria outlined in the introduction to this article.

2. Proposed methodology for ESP materials design and evaluation

The textbook will be evaluated according to the criteria that informed its design. Further issues that arise from the evaluation will be highlighted and integrated in the proposed evaluation model.

2.1 Syllabus presentation

The design of the syllabus was informed by the results of the needs analysis and each unit had its own syllabus meant to provide guidance to the students as regards the information and language content of the unit. Each unit syllabus specified topics and language focus in terms of skills, vocabulary or grammar area. Grammar teaching was approached throughout from a language awareness perspective whereby meaning and form are combined. Language is analysed in context and structural patterns are regarded as a resource to express meaning as is provided in table 2.

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Table 2. Example 1 - Unit 3: Project Cycle Management

Unit 3 - Project Cycle Management		
Topics	Skills focus	Language focus
Stages in Project Cycle Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reading for salient information ▪ Describing ▪ Speaking – project implementation strategy ▪ Presentation of decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Topic-related specific vocabulary ▪ Complex noun-phrases ▪ Expressing opinions ▪ Presentations vocabulary ▪ Complex sentences and discourse markers
Project implementation		

Apart from the syllabus in the student's handbook, the trainers' handbook contained a procedural syllabus outlining the activities to be conducted in class during each teaching session. An example is provided in table 3.

Table 3. Example 2 - Project cycle management (Trainer's handbook unit syllabus)

Session 1 - 9.00 – 10.45

Language and skills content	Trainer activity	Student activity	Timing
Skills focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reading key information ▪ describing Language focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complex sentences • key specific vocabulary • idioms 	Trainer sets discourse construction task asking students to work individually.	Students work on text construction task and contribute their answers in plenary.	20'
	Trainer collects answers in plenary discussion.	Students contribute with their background knowledge.	15'
	Trainer organises brainstorming activity on key elements of project cycle management and builds mind map of issues and lexis.	Students work in pairs to fill in and reorder text.	15'
	Trainer sets gap-filling task asking students to work in pairs to fill in the text with key word and order the paragraphs. Then checks answers in plenary.	Students study language input.	10'
	Trainer asks students to read the language input on complex noun phrases and gives additional examples.	Students work in pairs to do all the language tasks, then contribute answers to whole group discussion.	30'
	Trainer sets the language focus tasks on financial management of projects, asking students to work in pairs. Then invites discussion of most difficult items.		

These examples indicate two key points related to syllabus design that inform the proposed evaluation model. The first is that the syllabus should meet students' needs as identified in the needs analysis process, while the second major point regards mapping the content for both students and trainers in different ways that reflect the use of the textbook by the two categories.

2.2 Student participation in the learning process

The change in teacher and learner roles that accompanies an interactive approach to language teaching encourages students to take on responsibility for their own learning by active participation in the classroom, by contributing their background knowledge to teaching/learning processes and by reflecting on their own learning. Several tasks encouraged participants to contribute to the discussion by providing information and opinion (see table 4).

Table 4. Reading and discussion activity

<p>Reading and Discussion</p> <p>Task 1: Read the following description of the UK civil service. What similarities and differences can you find with the Romanian system?</p> <p>The Civil Service in the UK</p> <p>The Civil Service are the permanent administrative staff who work in Government Departments and carry out the policies of <i>Government</i>. They are employed by the Crown, therefore the Civil Service excludes those who are employed by Parliament and those employed by other public bodies. It excludes, for example, local government workers, the health service, fire service, police, etc. In 2000 there were nearly 500,000 Civil Servants, 80% of whom worked outside London. Members of the Civil Service are non-political in the sense that they work for the Government, whichever party forms it. The branch of the Civil Service that works in the <i>Foreign Office</i> and serves in British Embassies abroad is known as the Diplomatic Service.</p>

Apart from activities such as the one above which draws on participants' professional knowledge and opinions, each unit ends with a set of self-evaluation questions that encourage reflection on progress:

What have you learned from this unit?

What did you enjoy about it?

Have you any criticism of it?

2.3 Development of communication skills and strategies through diverse and relevant learning activities

The textbook was designed so as to provide a balance between subject specific language and professional skills and strategies operational in specific contexts of use. Reading, speaking and writing are catered for, both at the level of

receptions and production through accomplishment of realistic tasks. Learning and performing are closely interrelated, as students perform in order to learn, but learn in order to be able to perform in real professional situations.

The table 5 indicates the types of activities designed for the development of each major language skill.

Table 5. Skills and activities

Language skill	Types of activities
Reading	Comprehension questions Extracting salient information Analysing structure Text reconstruction from jumbled paragraphs Matching elements Fill in Discussion - expressing agreement/disagreement
Speaking	Brainstorming Discussion on a given topic Problem solving Information gap Dialogue construction on a given topic Role play Presentations
Writing	Summarising Rephrasing Information transfer Fill in Sentence matching Sentence completion Text completion Drafting letters/mission statement/ project proposal

Examples of activities drafted to develop language skills bring evidence of the approach and the level of student engagement. Integration of professional content and language input was envisaged at all times, and so was the need to match language use with the character of the activity so that the language that students generate is of the kind that would come up in a similar real-life situation. The task/activity had to be as close as possible to real-life situations. Such demands were considerably complex as the students were already part of the target professional context and had their own experience and perceptions of what they needed in terms of foreign language communication.

Another important design principle relates to the sequence of activities. The effects are two-fold: the activities help students construct the language they need in order to perform the final complex task, while they are encouraged to take

a process approach towards task completion. The outcomes are both linguistic and cognitive.

Table 6 contains an example of such an integrated, multi-level task.

Table 6. Integrated skills activity

Section 3: Drafting a mission statement	
<i>Task 1: Combine the following sets of words to obtain widely used collocations:</i>	
secure and stable	competitiveness
international	environment
outstanding	the potential
to uphold	service
to develop	the independence
to forge	a cohesive and harmonious society
to safeguard	sound plans
to shape	high standards of living
to attain	Eulandia's future
to foster	justice and equality
to meet	a common vision
to maximise	the needs
<i>Task 2: The text below is the Mission Statement of the Eulandia public service. Complete the text with the collocations you have just formed. The context will help you decide where the collocations fit.</i>	
<i>Eulandia Public Service Mission Statement</i>	
OUR MISSION	
We work with the elected Government to shape,	
..... Among Eulandians and transform the vision into a reality.	
We, sovereignty, security and prosperity of Eulandia.	
We, guided by the principles of incorruptibility, meritocracy and impartiality.	
OUR GOALS	
We build a dynamic, successful and vibrant nation of excellence, with a safe,.....	
We create the best conditions for Eulandia to succeed and for Eulandians.....	
We, based on respect, care and concern for fellow citizens.	

OUR CUSTOMERS

We provide quality service – responsive, efficient and courteous.

We treat our customers fairly and honestly, holding to high standards of professionalism, integrity and conduct.

We do our best to help our customers and

OUR STAFF

We value our staff. Wethrough continuing training and development. We encourage them to continuously improve their knowledge, skills and capabilities.

We offer our staff challenging and worthwhile responsibilities. We expect them to show commitment, resourcefulness and enterprise. We provide them with the tools, resources and environment to do a good job.

We require our staff to work well with others. We can and implement them effectively only when people at different levels with diverse abilities work closely together.

OUR BELIEFS

Respect for individual staff members is the first prerequisite forand wholehearted commitment.

Change is essential for continuously maintaining and improving Eulandia's in the global economy.

Excellence drives us to be the best that we can be in all that we do.

Learning from others, from feedback, and from mistakes is the best way to benefit from experience.

Leadership, which is bold, discerning and open to new ideas and insights, is crucial for steady progress and superior achievement.

Task 3: You will work in groups of 3. Each group will draft the statement section corresponding to one of the following headings:

Our mission

Our goals

Our customers

Our staff

Our beliefs

The tasks progress from collocation building to language use – using the collocations in context in a connected text – and finally to language production through a meaningful, realistic task, which requires display of vast language resources. It is a language and meaning integrated task which highlights a textbook

design and evaluation principle, i.e. proposing language activities that use language as a resource for the expression of meaning. Students manipulate language as a vehicle for meaning construction rather than as an end in itself. I would argue that if such a principle is observed at the design stage, the textbook will offer more variety of relevant tasks that could cater for development of cognitive as well as language skills.

2.4 A language awareness approach to grammar and vocabulary

In the 'English for Public Administration' textbook, language structures are not treated as a mere set of rules about formal requirements, but as a resource for expression of ideas. The language in each unit is content-related, contextualized and developed within realistic, purposeful activities. Fluency and accuracy are necessary components of effective communication and the proposed range of language activities aims to help develop both. A language awareness approach is essentially holistic as it invites investigation and exploration of language (Wright, 1994).

Meaning construction is the focus of the activity below, which follows input on textual cohesion as can be seen in table 7.

Table 7. Coherence activity

Unit 2-Task 5: *The following paragraphs have been jumbled. Put the sentences in the right order taking into account the cohesion devices discussed earlier. (The texts come from the section Regional Policy Success stories of the europa.eu website.)*

Eg. 1 Spreading the word - the Employment Bus

1. In the Vale de Campanhã in Porto, a bus has been transformed into a mobile employment and training information centre.
2. Using only limited financial and human resources, information suddenly becomes much more accessible to large numbers of people.
3. The first step to finding a job is to find out where the vacancies are
4. This Employment Bus brings information to different neighborhoods about new job opportunities, training programmes and support for setting up a business.

The use of the passive is presented with the same focus on meaning. Language users choose between active and passive constructions depending on the meanings they want to express and the activity provided in table 8 aims to highlight meaning differences and the need to make appropriate linguistic choices. Apart from being grammatically accurate, language needs to be appropriate in terms of fulfilling its communicative purposes. This example supports the claim in the introduction that textbooks should cater for all the components of communicative competence as outlined in the literature.

Table 8. Grammar activity

Unit 3-Task 5: *The following sentences are about the competition policy of the European Union. Look at each example and explain why the passive was used. Which of these sentences can be turned into the active voice and how does the meaning change?*

1. State aid *is prohibited* if it affects trade and thereby distorts competition.
2. Following accession, the EU's rules on state aid *are enforced* in the new member states *by the Commission*.
3. The exemptions – which include regional development aid and aid to sensitive sectors – *are spelled out* in the Treaty.
4. Exceptions and subsidies *are allowed* for inherently uneconomic services which *can be considered* a basic right, such as postal deliveries in rural areas.
5. Agreements which restrict competition *are prohibited*.
6. The Commission *is empowered* by the Treaty to apply these prohibition rules and enjoys a number of investigative powers to that end.
7. All National competition authorities are also empowered to apply fully the provisions of the Treaty in order to ensure that competition *is not distorted or restricted*.

The same approach is taken to vocabulary development, through introduction and practice of new lexis in context and development of meaning inference abilities. Students are encouraged to rely on clues offered by the text and on their existing knowledge.

There is an implicit concern with discourse competence in the English for Public Administration textbook. Many skills-focused activities pay due attention to discourse (cohesion, coherence, sequencing of ideas, text reconstruction, etc.) while several types of activities are dedicated to building discourse competence.

A major point to be made about the learning activities in the EPA textbook is that, apart from developing language abilities, they also aim to develop learning strategies which, I would argue, can apply more widely than to language learning only. Such strategies include:

- ✓ predicting the content of a text;
- ✓ reading a text and evaluating its relevance for a professional purpose;
- ✓ extracting salient information from a text;
- ✓ summarising a text;
- ✓ analysing the content, structure and style of texts and applying the insights into their own writing;
- ✓ selecting and organising the content of an oral presentation.

2.5 Classroom interaction

All interaction patterns are used throughout the textbook: individual, whole class, pair and group work. The choice of a certain pattern depends on the type and purpose of specific tasks. The presentation of task output should be organised in a way that reflects real-life communication but also taking into account pedagogical aspects such as the need for all students to listen to their colleagues.

3. Proposal for a textbook evaluation model

One of the main arguments of my analysis has been the need to match textbook evaluation criteria with textbook design criteria. It makes no sense to evaluate teaching/learning materials based on features that did not inform their design. A clear articulation of the teaching/learning philosophy needs to precede textbook design, in the same way in which establishment of textbook evaluation criteria will represent a set of beliefs about teaching and learning a language. If textbooks reflect 'linguistic fashion' (Sheldon 1988), then one cannot expect a textbook derived from the belief that language learning is about producing accurate grammar structures to display communication and interaction elements that focus on meaning rather than form.

The proposed language textbook evaluation model will be presented by outlining the evaluation criteria provided in table 9 to a set of questions to be answered by the evaluators. If evaluation is about asking the right questions (Almagro Esteban 2002) then the proposed questions will hopefully guide the evaluators in their task. Evaluators in the spirit of this article are primarily language professionals willing to adopt and adapt textbooks to the needs of their students. At the same time, textbook designers may find this instrument useful to the extent they have to make their own approach to language teaching explicit throughout the materials they design.

Table 9. Textbook evaluation criteria

Criterion	Guiding questions
1. Type of syllabus and identification of students' needs	<p>Are the situations in which students will use English in their professional activity properly identified in terms of range, purpose and interaction partners?</p> <p>What meanings do students need to communicate?</p> <p>What skills do they need in order to communicate successfully?</p> <p>What specific language do they need to use in order to construct those meanings?</p> <p>Is the content mapped differently for students and trainers so as to reflect the different ways in which they will use the textbook?</p>
2. Student participation in the learning process	<p>Do students have the knowledge and conceptual framework in order to understand specific input/perform specific tasks?</p> <p>Is students' existing knowledge tapped into and integrated in task accomplishment?</p>

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Criterion	Guiding questions
	<p>Is the task relevant/useful/interesting in terms of learning outcomes and motivation to complete it?</p> <p>Are students encouraged to evaluate their learning progress?</p>
3. Development of communication skills and strategies	<p>Are all abilities that make up communicative competence catered for (grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence)?</p> <p>Do students have the chance to learn and practice <i>what</i> to communicate and <i>how</i> to communicate?</p> <p>Are the tasks appropriate for the development of specific communication and cognitive skills?</p> <p>Do task outcomes engage students in realistic communication?</p>
4. Integrating meaning and form in the study of grammar and vocabulary	<p>Does the presentation of language integrate form and meaning?</p> <p>Are grammar structures and vocabulary taught as a set of options dedicated to the construction of meaning?</p> <p>Do learners get to interpret and analyse language in context?</p>
5. Types and range of learning tasks and activities	<p>Is the range of activities wide enough to cater for various learning styles?</p> <p>Does the textbook include tasks dedicated to the development of particular skills together with integrated tasks?</p> <p>Are there examples of tasks graded and sequenced so that the outcome of one task becomes the input of another?</p> <p>Is there evidence of a process approach to completion of complex integrated tasks?</p>
6. Authenticity of tasks	<p>How relevant are tasks and activities for the target situation?</p>

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Criterion	Guiding questions
	<p>How relevant are they for the learning situation? Are tasks designed so that the requested output encourages communication and interaction?</p> <p>Do interaction patterns (individual, pair work, group work) proposed match the purpose of the task?</p> <p>Are learners required to produce realistic language?</p> <p>Do the tasks encourage the use language as a resource for the expression of meaning?</p>
8. Development of learning strategies	Do the learning materials encourage the development of language learning and self-evaluation strategies?

Design of language learning materials is a complex activity which requires putting into practice sound methodological principles. The model proposed in this study was inspired by the design of a professional English textbook and can serve both as a checklist of design issues and as an evaluation tool. It embodies a set of language teaching principles but does not claim to be exhaustive. What it hopefully does is to offer language professionals a valid instrument that contributes to their awareness raising in relation to the content of textbooks, to the methodological beliefs underpinning a textbook and to their own role in adjusting/improving existing materials to the specific needs of their students.

Concluding remarks

Language textbook evaluation, albeit non-formal, is a frequently undertaken professional activity which needs appropriate tools. ESP practitioners can make a considerable contribution to the design and teaching of new courses based on their own practice-derived expertise and on the professional knowledge of their students. Guidelines about how to design new courses are useful to a certain extent, but the crucial quality ingredient can only come from the ESP professionals' awareness of the factors involved in course design and of the breadth of methodological tools they can employ in response to particular needs.

The instrument I have outlined in this study puts forward a set of questions that ESP professionals can usefully ask themselves at the outset of a course design process. I applied this instrument to the evaluation of a textbook designed for public administration professionals and have enriched it in the analysis process, suggesting that the principles that informed course design could be successfully used as a set of ESP materials evaluation criteria. Materials evaluation is a habitual professional activity in the field of ESP and for that reason needs to be conducted

according to sound principles and criteria. Equally, materials evaluation has a strong developmental potential and contributes to enriching and refining the methodological base of ESP professionals.

Returning to Allwright's question, the role of teaching materials is to guide students and lecturers through the array of skills and language needed for successful communication. The most appropriate set of teaching materials for any particular course can only come from the writing and adaptation made by the ESP professional involved in teaching a specific course.

Hopefully, the model I have put forward could be useful for design and evaluation of materials in other fields of study. Although many criteria and evaluation questions are obviously about language teaching and cannot be transferred as such, issues like student involvement in the learning process and student ability to evaluate progress and develop learning strategies apply to all areas of academic study. Authenticity of learning tasks should also concern lecturers in other fields of study, although the specific questions they will ask of their materials will be necessarily different. Therefore, the instrument presented in this study can be useful outside language teaching as an awareness raising instrument that highlights the range of issues to be taken into account when designing/evaluating teaching/learning materials. It can also highlight the need to move beyond transmission of information or communication of content and to give students opportunities to engage in critical analysis and evaluation of that content. The final decision belongs to students and lecturers in their specific educational contexts.

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