



ESP MATERIAL DESIGN: AN EXAMPLE OF A UNIT FROM ENGLISH FOR CUSTOMS OFFICERS

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This paper focuses in detail on material design of English for customs officers. Writing materials tend to have the primary role when designing ESP courses as the materials must fit the specific subject area of particular learners. Materials therefore have to be interesting to motivate learners (customs officers in this case). They should include authentic texts, specialist language terminology and content, and exercise structures which enable the practice of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, as well as other micro-skills relating to the area of customs. The paper presents in detail a unit on smuggling drugs. It shows a skills-based approach to ESP course and unit design.

Key words: ESP, customs, material design, specific languages, methodology

■ INTRODUCTION

As we enter a new millennium, the ability and the need to understand and communicate with each other has become increasingly important, at times even urgent. The international exchange of ideas – from environmental issues such as the thinning of the ozone layer and the warming of the planet to medical topics such as genetic engineering to the expansion in technical and economic activity – is essential. To meet these communication needs, more and more individuals have highly specific academic and professional reasons for seeking to improve their language skills: for these students, courses that fall under the heading English for Specific Purposes (ESP), hold particular appeal.

As a future EU member, Slovenia's main task at the moment has been adapting to EU laws in all areas, including customs. Since its independence, Slovenia has been visited by significantly more people from all over the world, and it has become increasingly important for the Slovene customs authorities not

only to apply certain EU laws but also to improve the effectiveness of the English language used by those working at the border posts. In order to accomplish the set goal successfully, on the job English language training courses were offered to customs officers and a course book was designed.

■ ESP MATERIAL DESIGN

English language teaching should be learner-centred (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987), i.e. it should not only concentrate on competence itself but also how competence is acquired. In other words, English language teaching should respond to the language needs of the learner. Before writing any materials, the educator should identify the wants, needs, skills and knowledge of the learner.

Materials writing is one of the most characteristic features of ESP. The main reason for that is that ESP materials must fit the specific subject area of particular learners. Thus, ma-

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materials have to be interesting to motivate learners. Since motivation plays such an important role in ESP language teaching and is undoubtedly closely linked with the learners materials, the design of materials tends to be the primary activity in the development of ESP courses. And one of the most important prerequisites of functionally and effectively designed ESP material is the cooperation between language methodologists and field experts.

■ **THE ENGLISH FOR CUSTOMS OFFICERS COURSE BOOK**

The English for customs officers course book was designed in January 2000 but has not been published yet (it is still being tested). The idea was brought up by the educational team at the Customs Administration of the Republic Slovenia, who wanted to improve the effectiveness of the English language for customs officers working at the border posts around Slovenia. In former Yugoslavia, such a course book already existed, but the approach towards the whole course took the wrong turning. This time, the Customs Administration of the Republic of Slovenia decided to devote more time to this matter. In cooperation with one of the private language schools in Ljubljana (myself being the Head of the English Department and a teacher of various ESP courses at this school at that time), the project took a fresh start. The educational team consisted not only of language experts but also of experts on customs and related topics.

The first step in the process of material design is a needs analysis of the target situation. Customs officers in Slovenia, as a case in point shows, are people working at the border posts. At work they are required to speak in real-life situations at the border posts and read magazines, manuals, newspapers and other specialized literature, all of which is basically published in English due to the reason that Slovenia is preparing to enter the EU. Therefore, most of the units in the course book are based on dialogues, a reading input, or merely just a discussion about the topic, since

customs officers most frequently find themselves in these types of situations. The course book consists of nine units comprising major fields of customs – customs offences and duties, effects, smuggling, transporting goods by rail, air and road, etc.

The input is already very clearly defined by the topic of the unit itself; there are usually no straight guidelines. Since most ESP courses are content-based, including most English for customs officers courses, the exercises also normally focus on the subject matter rather than grammar. However, a specific register should not be the only basis for such courses. To provide learners with a specified knowledge and at the same time develop skills and strategies to process relevant information, a skills-based approach was chosen in this case. Each unit focuses on different skills depending on the topic of the unit, in which also grammar and vocabulary are being learnt.

Naturally, the attempt to divide exercises under skill headings is a little bit artificial because under a certain skill heading many other related skills can be practised. However, in this way the most important language items which must be practised and the appropriate way of practising them are covered.

■ **ESP MATERIAL DESIGN ON THE EXAMPLE OF A UNIT ON SMUGGLING DRUGS**

Unit 6 – *Smuggling drugs* – has been chosen to show what the material looks like in practice. That is particularly due to the reason that I have for a long time been teaching customs inspectors working on anti-smuggling and have myself designed the whole unit on smuggling, wrote key to exercises and notes to the teacher for this unit (other units were designed in cooperation with my colleagues).

Drug smuggling has become an increasingly important issue in the last couple of years, and the customs authorities have successfully been fighting drug trafficking in Slovenia. Customs officers mostly read about smuggling or attend seminars to obtain information on what

is happening around the world in the area of smuggling. In this way they find out how people smuggle, where they hide drugs, how they react, etc.

To successfully design material for this unit, authentic text resources had to be found. When an ESP text is used for language teaching purposes, it is automatically removed from its original context, simplified, and therefore adapted to the learning process. Despite their no longer being real "authentic" texts, articles, reports and statistics about smuggling from all over the world from a magazine called *Insights* proved to be a very useful resource material. There were also numerous handbooks on risk assessment, profiling, and targeting about smuggling, which provided clearer insight into the specificity of the area and give many an idea of what to include in the tasks of the unit. In addition, a video was available on the detection of containers which have been altered to smuggle contraband. This added a special, extra dimension to the learning experience.

Text selection and adaptation was only one step in the difficult process of writing materials. The next step, which was a more productive one, was the selection of the exercise types and the writing of the exercises. Since our learners primarily need reading skills where smuggling is concerned, this unit paid great attention to reading tasks. Checking information evident from the text and understanding the gist (matching headlines with their articles) are included in this unit. With the video, listening skills can also be practised, through which a significant number of micro-skills (Dudley-Evans, 1998) are related – identifying the topic and following topic development, recognising key lexical items related to topic, and deducing the meanings of words from the context, to name but a few.

English for customs officers has its particularities also in lexis and grammar. On the lexical level the use of the terminology of the particular area is very important. Matching terms with definitions is the first step, which is followed up with the use of terms in sen-

tences. Nationality words as a part of the vocabulary on smuggling are given special attention in the unit. Practising derivation has proved to be one of the best and most useful exercises, in addition to several productive exercises on the translation of articles about smuggling, where both grammar and lexis are put in the front. In terms of grammar, one of the most characteristic features of ESP, including English for customs officers, is the extensive use of the passive voice. Articles containing information about smuggling usually try to be impersonal – the names of people are often avoided for obvious reasons. That is one reason why it is necessary for the learners to become familiar with the form. Another reason is that English generally makes more use of the passive voice than the Slovene language. The exercises on the passive voice are therefore carefully staged – from the simplest formation of the past participle to turning active constructions into passive ones, etc. The unit closes with translating newspaper articles from Slovene into English.

To get a clearer insight into the unit itself, some parts (six pages out of eight) have been chosen to be presented in this paper. The theoretical part on the passive voice was deliberately omitted as it only summarizes the form and use of the passive voice, which can be found in any course book. The second page missing is a list of nationality words (country, adjective, inhabitant(s), language). Numerous additional exercises on smuggling were also designed, which are, however, not a part of this unit but used as the additional material for inspectors of higher level of language knowledge, who are given additional individual hours of language training.

The final analysis and evaluation of the course book will be drawn up at the end of 2001. Some revisions will undoubtedly take place in the future, and the approach exemplified here will be food for thought for those who have already dared so far to share ideas about writing ESP materials.





READING AND SPEAKING

Pre-reading task

1. Have you ever heard anything about smuggling drugs?
2. Which countries in Europe have the highest smuggling rate?
3. What kind of people are usually smugglers?

Reading for information

Carefully read the following newspaper article and answer the questions underneath in complete sentences.

Heroin and Herb 'Blues' for Stansted



First to arrive from Amsterdam, into Stansted's Blue Channel, was the heroin. The drug was in two brown-tape wrapped packages which were being body-packed by an ICI Dutch male. The 36 year old kitchen fitter was intercepted by Kevin Warren following his arrival on the KLM UK2009. Questioning established that he was resident in the Netherlands, was travelling on a recently issued passport, had purchased his ticket for cash on the day and was on his fifth trip to the UK over the previous four weeks. All of which raised enough suspicion for a search of person to be granted. In a private room all was revealed... including the kilo of heroin.

(Insights: 1998)

Comprehension check

1. Where did the heroin arrive from?
2. Where and how was it hidden?
3. What nationality was the smuggler?
4. Was it a man or a woman?
5. How old was the smuggler?
6. What was his/her job?
7. Was his passport issued a long time ago?
8. How many times has the smuggler already been to the United Kingdom over the previous four weeks?
9. How much heroin was revealed?

VOCABULARY



It is often possible to guess the meaning of words you don't know by looking at the context.

1. Read the newspaper article carefully once again. Match the expressions on the left with the definitions on the right.

1.	to wrap	a	to stop sth/sb that is travelling from one place to another
2.	to smuggle	b	a person who lives or has a home in a place, not a visitor
3.	to intercept	c	the feeling or thought, without certain proof, that sb is guilty of sth, that sth is wrong
4.	a fitter	d	not long ago
5.	an arrival	e	a person whose job is to put together, adjust and repair machinery and equipment
6.	a resident	f	a journey
7.	recently	g	to cover or enclose sth completely in paper or plastic
8.	a trip	h	to buy sth
9.	suspicion	i	the action of arriving
10.	to purchase	j	to take, send or bring goods secretly and illegally into or out of a country

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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2. Complete the sentences below with words from the first column above.

- ✓ A female who claimed to be a lifeguard by profession was stopped as she returned from a _____ to St Lucia.
- ✓ In the search room, officers found her to be wearing a black corset. When this was removed, two tape-_____ packages of cocaine were found.
- ✓ Customs officers _____ him as he tried to leave by the rear entrance.
- ✓ After a crime, _____ naturally falls on the person who has a motive for it.
- ✓ Three German citizens _____ Swiss watches every month last year.



GRAMMAR EXERCISES

1. Write in the Past Simple and the Past Participle of the following verbs. Some are regular and some are irregular.

	PAST SIMPLE	PAST PARTICIPLE
make		
intercept		
search		
buy		
smuggle		
write		
examine		

2. Find the examples of the passive voice in the newspaper article (*Heroin and Herb "Blues" for Stansted*) at the beginning of this unit.
3. Put the verbs in brackets into the correct forms of the Past Simple passive voice.
- ✓ While I was on holiday, my camera _____ (steal) from my hotel room.
 - ✓ A female who claimed to be a lifeguard by profession _____ (stop) by a customs officer at the border post.
 - ✓ They found 3 kilos of cocaine on her. She _____ (arrest) and later _____ (charge).
 - ✓ Jack returned to the UK after a 19 day spell in Jamaica. His ticket _____ (buy) at Newmont Travel for cash.
 - ✓ The drugs _____ (find) in their luggage and concealed in plastic coat hangers.
 - ✓ The United Kingdom seized million dollars worth of drugs. Most of the money _____ (discover) in Swiss bank accounts.
4. Put the verbs in brackets into the correct forms, active or passive.
- ✓ A 33 year old British male, resident in Georgetown _____ (arrest) for attempting to smuggle arms.
 - ✓ He _____ (buy) a ticket 2 days before his flight.
 - ✓ Heroin _____ (hid) in the car boot, although no one saw it.
 - ✓ The customs officer most often _____ (ask) the same question: "Do you have anything to declare?"
 - ✓ _____ (be) the goods carried across the borders free of duty?
 - ✓ The driver _____ (hand in) the customs declaration and the customs officer _____ (examine) the goods.
 - ✓ Many accident _____ (cause) by dangerous driving nowadays.
 - ✓ The smuggler _____ (swallow) 5 packages of cocaine.
 - ✓ The ticket _____ (issue) only a day before the flight.
 - ✓ The old building _____ (pull down) at the moment.
 - ✓ The officers _____ (suspect) that the woman was hiding drugs.

VOCABULARY – NATIONALITY WORDS



Fill in the blanks with appropriate adjectives or nouns as suggested by the name of the country.

- ✓ The 21 year old _____ (the NETHERLANDS) student had purchased her cash paid ticket on the day of the flight.
- ✓ The security guard was born in Equatorial Guinea but was a _____ (SPAIN) citizen.
- ✓ The 25 year old _____ (the UNITED KINGDOM) was self-employed.
- ✓ One of the customs officer stopped the 35 year old _____ (the UNITED KINGDOM) sales assistant and was not happy with her explanation for the trip or the change in itinerary.
- ✓ An immigration officer became suspicious of an _____ (ALBANIA) female's reasons for coming to the UK.
- ✓ Jamaica has signed an agreement with the _____ (the USA – Pl.) to cooperate in the fight against illegal drugs.
- ✓ A _____ (GERMANY) citizen claimed to have been in the UK two weeks earlier to meet a friend who was arriving from Jamaica.
- ✓ Packages of cocaine were carried in the luggage of a _____ (HUNGARY) couple.
- ✓ The official discovered most of the money in _____ (SWITZERLAND) bank accounts.
- ✓ The _____ (ITALY) authorities were able to adopt the job, although no news has been received yet.
- ✓ The first passenger to arrive was a _____ (TURKEY) businessman.
- ✓ The official arrested a 28 year old _____ (SWEDEN) and his wife.
- ✓ The woman, an unemployed _____ (FRANCE) national, had planned on spending two weeks in the UK.
- ✓ The _____ (CHINA) have recently signed an important trade treaty with the _____ (JAPAN).
- ✓ The _____ (CANADA) government is by no means the only one facing nationalist problems.



READING

Pre-reading task

Look at the following titles of newspaper articles and discuss in pairs what the titles suggest.

1. Not a Life-Belt but a Body-Belt
2. Second Pair of Shoes to Milan
3. Honeymoon Couple Forget Luggage
4. Air Jamaica Swallowers

Reading and matching

Read the following newspaper articles about smuggling drugs and match the articles with the suggested titles in the pre-reading task.

Whilst the previous courier was relieved of an entire leg, Simon King's passenger got off more lightly. All they took were his shoes. The reason being that the soles contained 500gms of coke. The footwear belonged to a 21 year old Jamaican IC3 male who arrived from Mo' Bay on the JM001. The passenger, like another detected at Gatwick off the BA4520 a few days earlier (page five), was headed for Milan. Similarly, he too had cocaine in shoes. In this case the Italian authorities were able to adopt the job, although no news has been received as yet.

Jeremy Betts of AST17 picked up the first of the trio. This particular importation was brought in by a 35 year old IC3 female from Jamaica. The executive chef from Runaway Bay was booked to spend three weeks in the UK. She had purchased her ticket at International Travel three days earlier and paid with cash. Her passport had been issued a month earlier. Whilst in a search room, the officers suspected that the woman was concealing a package about her person. Shortly afterwards, the woman removed a package of cocaine from her vagina. Over the next few days a further 37 swallowed packages were produced bringing the total coke to 668gms.

An IC1 female who claimed to be a lifeguard by profession was stopped by Kim Spencer as she returned from a weeks trip to St Lucia. The 22 year old from Shepperton had arrived on the BA2154 using a ticket which had been bought with cash at British Airways on the day of departure. At interception she was found to be carrying only £40 in cash. Although a search of her baggage yielded no positive results, it was decided to conduct a search of the woman's person. In the search room, officers found her to be wearing a black corset. When this was removed it was found to be securing two tape-wrapped packages. These contained a total of 3110gms of cocaine. The woman was arrested and later charged.

A South African, IC1, male and female couple who arrived on the BA054 from Durban, via Johannesburg, claimed to be on a nine day honeymoon. However, they would not have got very far on their holiday without their suitcases which they failed to collect before attempting to exit the controls. The reason for abandoning the two bags was already clear to Tarmac's Paul Sienko. He had already examined them and found that both had false bottom concealments which in total contained 20Kgs of herbal cannabis. The man - a 38 year old truck driver - and the 40 year old woman had arrived on credit card paid tickets. The baggage tags and their booking details clearly linked them to the cases.

LISTENING AND WATCHING – CONTAINER SEARCH



Pre-watching task

1. Have you ever worked at the port of Koper?
2. Have you ever been involved in a container search?
3. How important is to search the containers and why?

Watching video

You are going to watch a video on a container search. Watch the video carefully for the first time and try to remember as much as you can. The film is divided into seven sections.

Watching video for the second time

Watch the video carefully and try to answer the questions. Your teacher will stop the film after each section for you to have time to write the answers.

SECTION 1 – IDENTIFY CONTAINER & INITIAL CHECK

1. Who provides all the facilities necessary to unload the container?
2. Where should the seal be kept after its removal?

SECTION 2 – UNLOADING GOODS & USE OF THE DRUG DOG

1. Whose responsibility is to open the container?
2. What should be ensured when opening the container?

SECTION 3 – WEIGHT CHECKS

1. Where are weights printed?

SECTION 4 – SAFETY & RUMMAGE EQUIPMENT

1. What kind of rules must be applied?
2. What is necessary to be worn during a container search?
3. Where should a search be carried out?

SECTION 5 – THE EXTERNAL SEARCH

1. What should never be done when searching a container?
2. What should be carefully examined outside the container?

SECTION 6 – THE INTERNAL SEARCH

1. What should the internal search be based on?
2. Who will pay for the damage claims that may arise?

SECTION 7 – RELOADING & SEALING

1. Who reloads the container after it was fully searched?
2. Who reseals the load?

Post-watching task

- State the basic principles governing the systematic search of loaded containers and their contents.
- Identify the methods and resources needed when searching loaded containers and their contents.
- Identify potential concealments while searching a container.



CONCLUSION

The overview of English for customs officers, as a case in point, tries to demonstrate the complexity of one particular ESP topic and offers a terminological framework for narrow research in this field. The English course for customs officers proved that there is a need for the development of ESP courses. Moreover, specially designed materials proved to be one of the most important components of such types of courses. Not

only have the materials gained visibility within the chosen discourse community, but they have also demonstrated how a body of knowledge about language or discourse or society can be applied to use, and most importantly, how such materials influence ESP learners in the best way possible. Learners become strongly motivated to learn a language when it is adjusted to their needs and interests. ESP material design therefore deserves by all means a special place and attention in English language teaching.

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ENGLISKI ZA POSEBNE POTREBE: PRIMJER NASTAVNE JEDINICE IZ ENGLISKOG ZA CARINIKE

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Ključne riječi:

engleski za posebne potrebe, priprema materijala, carinski službenici, strukovni jezik, metodologija