

ALIGNMENT BETWEEN A VIETNAMESE ESP CURRICULUM AND WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION NEEDS

Le Lan Phuong*

Baria-Vungtau University, Vung Tau, Viet Nam
Email: phuong213@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

At a time of English-mediated globalisation, modernisation and development, improving English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curricula has become a priority in Vietnam as it seeks to meet workplace communication needs. The current paper is pioneering in that it aims to examine the alignment between university ESP curricula and workplace communication needs, especially in the petroleum industry which is central to Vietnamese industrialisation. The study employed a qualitative case study approach drawing on interviews, audio recordings, document analysis and classroom observations. The findings will contribute to modeling a workplace-oriented ESP curriculum for Vietnamese universities that prioritises the particular communication needs of specialist personnel.

Keywords: workplace communication needs, ESP curriculum

1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnamese graduates' low English language proficiency (ELP), especially in communication, is considered one of the obstacles to employment in companies where English language is used (Tran, 2015b; Ngo, 2015). These graduates cannot use English to communicate effectively in the workplace, or even in job interviews in English, despite studying English for seven years at school and two more years at college. This is a common problem for most Vietnamese graduates (Mai and Iwashita, 2012; Tran, 2013; Dan Anh, 2016). This mostly indicates ill preparation by universities of students' workplace communication, including English for Specific Purposes (ESP) education, which is possibly caused by many factors related to teachers, materials, teaching methods, testing and curriculum.

Due to the increasing demand for ELP in the time of globalisation and the imperative of the National Foreign Language 2020 project, an increasing number of studies have been conducted to improve the quality of Vietnamese ESP teaching and learning. These studies discuss related issues such as designing the ESP curriculum and

* Le Lan Phuong has got a fifteen-year-experience of teaching English as Foreign Language at Vietnamese universities. Her PhD thesis conducted in Queensland University of Technology, Australia was about aligning the ESP curricula in Vietnamese universities with workplace communication needs. Phuong is currently the Dean of Faculty of English language and also Deputy head of School of Languages, Cultures and Arts, Baria-Vungtau university. Her research interests include ESP teaching and learning, curriculum development, needs analysis, professional communication, corpus analysis, lexical analysis, and vocabulary teaching and learning.

syllabus (Vu, 2015; Nguyễn, 2016; Do, 2012; Bui, 2016), Vietnamese learner's autonomy (Dang, 2010; Le, 2013), ESP teaching approaches (Nguyen, 2015; Tran, 2015a), or difficulties in teaching ESP (Nguyen and Pham, 2016). As a part of this trend, the current study contributes to improving Vietnamese ESP curricula in terms of their alignment with workplace communication needs. Specifically, the study aims to gain a deep understanding of the alignment between the English for petroleum engineering (EPE) curriculum at a private university, namely Baria – Vungtau university (BVU) and workplace communication needs of two petroleum companies in Vietnam. From this, practical implications could be made to improve the ESP curriculum. The current study aims to answer the central research question:

To what extent does the English for petroleum engineering curriculum at Baria – Vungtau university align with the workplace communication needs of two petroleum companies in Vietnam?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature shows that an ongoing problem of ESP is the disconnect between ESP courses and workplace communication needs. Most ESP research focuses on discussing language forms because these studies are conducted based on the traditional view of ESP, in which ESP aims to equip learners with language knowledge and skills in a specific professional domain for their workplace communication (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans, 1998). This indicates that ESP courses traditionally focus on teaching language knowledge or textual knowledge (Huhta et al., 2013).

Recently, there has been a new view on ESP in which ESP should be specific to the professional context – communication, not just the language of a professional domain like petroleum engineering. ESP's specificity should concern "the dynamic communication practices of particular professional discourse communities rather than the language associated with a particular professional group" (Huhta et al., 2013: 36). In the words of Bhatia et al. (2011), ESP should focus on communication, not just the linguistic elements characterising a professional domain. Based on this new view on ESP, the current study focuses on solving the ongoing problem of ESP through the concept of alignment to provide a deeper understanding of industry communication and greater inclusion of relevant material and curriculum topics in ESP courses, which is completely new and certainly new in ESP.

Consequently, to examine the practice of teaching ESP at BVU and English language use in the two petroleum companies, a holistic model of workplace communication is employed as a conceptual framework in this study, which is outlined in the following section.

2.1. Conceptual framework of the study

Based on Boswood's (1999) viewpoint on professional communication, Huhta et al. (2013) state that four kinds of knowledge are required for a professional to communicate in the workplace, including (1) textual knowledge, (2) global, institutional and organisational knowledge, (3) social action knowledge and (4) participant knowledge with 30 attributes, as shown in the following figure:

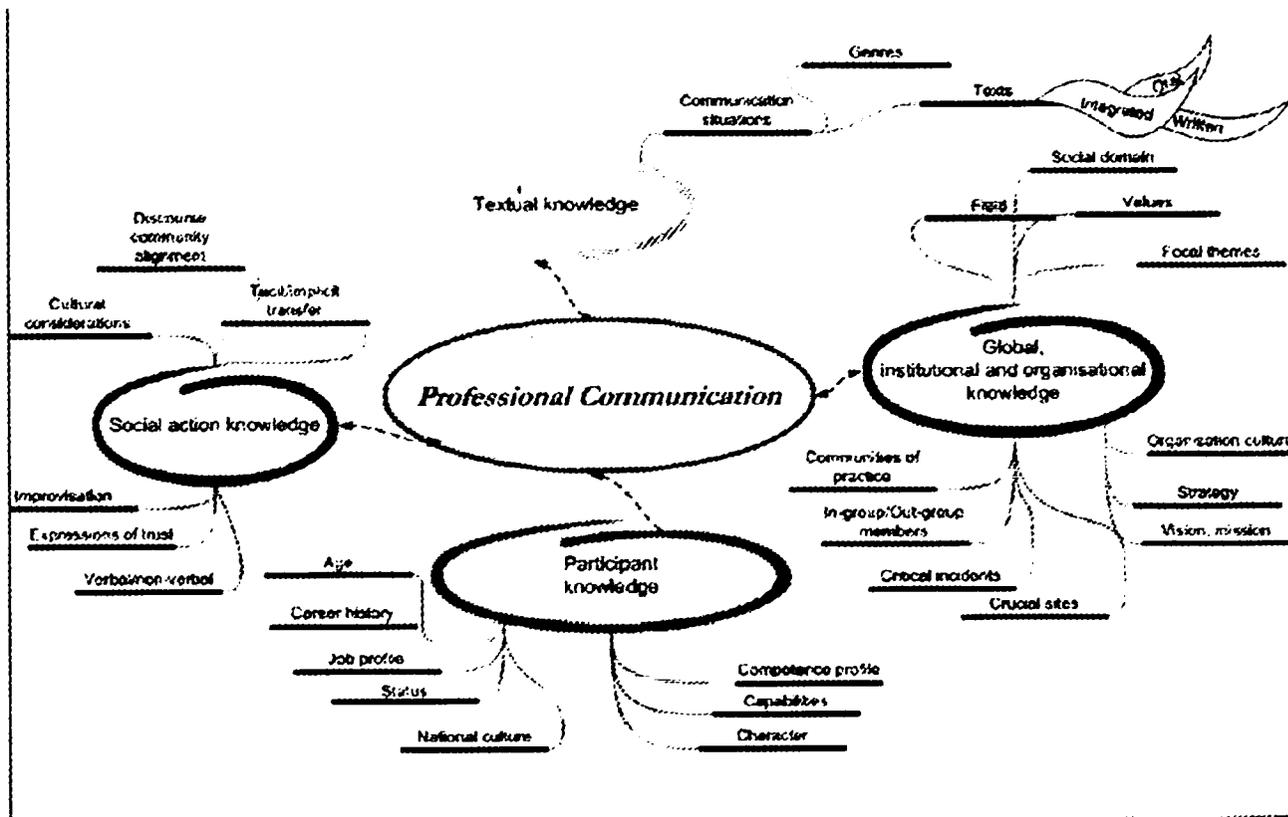


Figure Error! No text of specified style in document..1. Huhta et al.'s (2013) model of professional communication.

Retrieved from <http://www.proflang.org/@Bin/138563/Marjatta+Huhdan+esitys.pdf>.
Reprinted with permission.

2.2. Textual knowledge

Canale and Swain (1980, 1981) state that textual knowledge plays an important role in communication and they argue that with this kind of knowledge, the speaker can use “knowledge and skills needed for understanding and expressing the literal meaning of utterances” (Bagarić and Djigunović, 2007, p.97). In Huhta et al.’s (2013) model of professional communication, textual knowledge includes (1) knowledge of communication situations like reading technical report, (2) knowledge of genres like daily calls and (3) knowledge of texts including knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

2.3. Participant knowledge

Huhta et al. (2013) consider that participant knowledge refers to the information about the communicating participant’s age, career history, job profile, status and national culture, competence profile, capacities and character. In their point, each professional needs to have this kind of knowledge because of its great influence on workplace communication.

2.4. Global, institutional and organisational knowledge

According to Huhta et al. (2013), discourse practice varies among social institutions and each social institution has its particular discursive practice. In order to communicate well in such certain organisations, a professional is required to have global, institutional and organisational knowledge or “knowledge of the institutional and local socio-culture” (Huhta et al., 2013: 44). This kind of knowledge concerns knowledge of the values, field, social domain, focal themes, communities of practice, critical incidents, crucial sites, organisation culture, in-group or out-group members, strategy, vision and mission. Huhta et al. (2013) state that this kind of knowledge can increase the success of communication particularly in multicultural workplaces in which communicators need to consider the cultural factors that might affect communication.

2.5. Social action knowledge

Social action knowledge refers to various issues, including expressions of trust, tacit/implicit transfer, cultural considerations, discourse community alignment, improvisation and verbal/non-verbal knowledge. Huhta et al. (2013) suggest a professional should also have social action knowledge since “the social action perspective emphasises the actual realisation of the communicative event in its immediate context as participants make sense of the status quo and communicate as best they can” (Huhta et al., 2013: 47).

This model of professional communication developed by Huhta et al. (2013) is used in this study as a foundation to discuss workplace communication needs in the two petroleum companies and to discuss the EPE education provision at BVU.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in three phases by employing a qualitative case study approach, based on Huhta et al.'s (2013) model of professional communication. In Phase One, I identified and investigated kinds of knowledge needed for workplace communication in two petroleum companies in Vietnam (named Company One and Two). In Phase Two, I examined what kinds of knowledge were taught in English for petroleum engineering curriculum at Baria-Vungtau university. In Phase Three, I compared the findings in Phase One and Phase Two to investigate the alignment between them and make suggestions to fit their potential gaps.

3.1. *Data collection*

In Phase One, I collected data in the two biggest petroleum companies in Vietnam which play a crucial role in Vietnam's industrialisation, modernisation and integration. Each year, they contribute about 10% of income to Vietnam's state budget. Company One is a joint venture between Vietnam, Japan, and France while Company Two involves Russian and Vietnamese companies. The employees in these companies come from different countries so English is used as a lingua franca here. Emails and daily calls are key genres in workplace communication in these companies. Everyday they write emails to their co-workers and join in daily calls between offshore and onshore to discuss technical issues. So, they were the key focus of analysis in this phase.

In Phase Two, the data was collected at a Vietnamese private university, BVU and I focused on the English for petroleum engineering course, which was taught to the petroleum engineering students in their third university year. In their first two years, they learnt General English 1&2.

3.2. *Data analysis*

The data were analysed mainly thematically based on Huhta et al.'s (2013) model of professional communication. The main steps of data analysis included organising the data sources, transcribing, translating, coding, identifying emergent themes, one phase and cross phase analysis.

As a part of Phase One, in order to gain a deeper understanding of vocabulary knowledge needed in the two companies, I conducted a corpus analysis. A 32,000-word corpus was developed from the emails and daily calls of petroleum engineers with their co-workers in two petroleum companies during a week. According to Nation (2013), there are four kinds of words, namely high frequency words, technical words, academic words and low frequency words. Based on this word classification, the words in this corpus were classified and also thanks to Nation's RANGE computer program and a petroleum engineering dictionary, the corpus was analysed.

4. Findings and discussion

In Huhta et al.'s (2013) model, for professional communication, a professional is required to have textual knowledge and contextual knowledge including participant knowledge; global, institutional and organisational knowledge and social action knowledge. Based on this conceptual framework, the findings show that there was a misalignment between the EPE curriculum at BVU and the workplace communication needs in the two petroleum companies in Vietnam. While all the four kinds of knowledge were clearly evident in the company data, only textual knowledge was found in the university data, as detailed in the following sections.

5. TEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE

5.1. *Communication situations*

As shown in Huhta et al.'s (2013) model, textual knowledge refers to the knowledge of communication situations, genres and texts, and includes grammatical knowledge and vocabulary knowledge. The company data shows that the petroleum engineers in the two companies usually took part in 14 language/communication situations, i.e. writing technical emails to supervisors, colleagues and vendors, as listed in Appendix A.

The university data revealed that the importance of communication situation knowledge was acknowledged and taught to the EPE students at BVU. In some regards, then, it seems that there was an alignment between the companies and BVU. However, this alignment was paid insufficient attention to when only three out of the 14 communication situations needed in the workplace were presented to the EPE students: reading technical documents, translating technical documents and describing a process. It can be said that the teaching of the three communication situations in the EPE course was unlikely to have met the workplace communication needs of petroleum engineers in the petroleum companies where 14 language/communication situations were found to be used commonly in communication between engineers. Moreover, using inauthentic materials in teaching the three communication situations did not expose the EPE students to the practices that will characterise their future workplace. Authenticity is fundamental to providing ESP learners with the particular forms of "cognitive structures required for expert performance" (Billett, 1996: 15) needed in specific workplace contexts (Huhta et al., 2013; So-mui and Mead, 2000; Mohamed et al., 2014).

5.2. *Genres*

Knowledge of genres, the second aspect of textual knowledge, played an important role in workplace communication in the two petroleum companies. A series of typical genres, e.g. emails or telephone calls, as presented in Appendix A, were used by a majority of the petroleum engineers in these companies. Nevertheless, none of these workplace genres

were taught in the EPE course. Instead, the EPE teacher taught her students how to write essays, as she believed that this knowledge would be useful for her students in writing reports. The EPE teacher seemed unaware that essays and workplace genres (e.g., reports) were different genres with different textual features. This point highlights the need to explicitly teach how to write reports and other specific genres needed in the workplace, rather than essays. In other words, the EPE course particularly and ESP courses generally should be taught as 'training' (Huhta et al., 2013: 40) to expose the EPE or ESP students to workplace communication. Also, it is suggested that through ESP teacher education programs at university, the EPE teacher or other ESP teachers should be equipped with knowledge of genres in the workplace and how to teach them.

The EPE teacher's teaching of writing essays rather than specific genres in the workplace may result from the fact that ESP originally emerged from English language teaching and a focus on academic skill preparation. On this point, there is a need to align the EPE course better with workplace communication practice, which would result in the expansion of the scope of the EPE course. This would mean that the course would be focused more on workplace communication rather than foreign language education (Huhta et al., 2013).

5.3. *Texts*

The findings from the analysis of the company data revealed that grammatical accuracy was not considered important for workplace communication in the two petroleum companies. This was evident in the email and call communication between the petroleum engineers in these companies, in which these engineers could still communicate effectively despite some ungrammaticality. All the company participants confirmed that those mistakes were acceptable if the meaning could be conveyed. This suggests that the limited explicit grammar tuition in the EPE curriculum at BVU was unlikely an issue. The university data showed that grammar was only revised rather than being taught in this curriculum because it was taught in previous general English courses. It seems that there was an alignment between the EPE curriculum and the workplace communication needs in this kind of knowledge. In other words, the grammatical knowledge of EPE students could likely meet the requirement for work in the two companies in which grammatical accuracy was not prioritised.

Regarding vocabulary knowledge, there were both alignments and misalignments between the vocabulary knowledge requirement of the petroleum engineers in the companies and the teaching of this kind of knowledge in the EPE curriculum. Concerning the alignment, technical words played an important role in workplace communication in the two petroleum companies since they usually contain specialised knowledge (Gablasova, 2015; Tangpijaikul, 2014). The importance of technical vocabulary was highly acknowledged by the academic coordinator and the EPE teacher, which resulted in a focus

on teaching this kind of vocabulary in the EPE course. Another alignment was related to aspects of vocabulary that were considered important in the companies and that were taught in the EPE curriculum.

However, there were also misalignments related to vocabulary knowledge in both workplace communication and university provision. The findings from the company data revealed that besides technical words, high frequency words played a crucial role in workplace communication. This is evidenced in the fact that high frequency words accounted for the highest percentage of text coverage (around 51% of the total) and 56% of technical words also came from this type of vocabulary in the emails and calls in both companies. Nation and Newton (1997) claim that teaching vocabulary should be focused on words with high frequency; it follows that these kinds of words should be taught in ESP courses. However, this was not found in the EPE course, where high frequency words were missing in the curriculum. It is clear that in order to bridge the gap as identified above, high frequency words should be taught in the EPE curriculum.

Although the teaching of vocabulary and grammar knowledge in the EPE course aligned with the vocabulary and grammar knowledge requirement of petroleum engineers in the two companies, some further issues should be discussed. Firstly, the question is raised of whether this alignment could secure the EPE students' employment in these two companies as Vietnam joins global organisations. It should be noted that many of the petroleum engineers in the two companies are older and were recruited at an earlier time when the English language proficiency of Vietnamese people was lower than today. However, an increasing number of overseas Vietnamese graduates and foreign petroleum engineers are seeking job opportunities in Vietnam. Many of the overseas graduates and foreigners have specialised knowledge and are proficient in English language. Their English proficiency is usually higher than local students because they live in English-speaking countries and use the language constantly. In this case, the local students have to compete with overseas labour forces even in their home country (Dan Anh, 2016; MOLISA, 2016b; T. P. L. Nguyen & Phung, 2015). Therefore, in order to help the local students, especially EPE students at BVU, to be able to compete with these overseas students, the EPE course at BVU must be improved to provide students with the knowledge and skills to work competently in the Vietnamese petroleum industry after graduation.

Furthermore, the alignments regarding vocabulary and grammar knowledge between the EPE course and workplace communication needs in the two companies should be considered more carefully when the EPE students seek jobs in foreign countries. Moreover, in Vietnamese petroleum companies, Vietnamese petroleum engineers can be sent to work in foreign countries through Petrol Vietnam's overseas projects in Venezuela, Peru, Algeria, Congo, Madagascar, Cuba, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Lao, Cambodia, Russia, Mongolia, and Uzbekistan (PVN, 2016). They may also seek for jobs in English-speaking countries, e.g., the US, or Australia. On this point, BVU and other Vietnamese universities

with petroleum education need to have a wider vision, which means that they should also target their training at students who might be eligible to work abroad, especially in countries where English is the first language. Vietnamese universities have focused mainly on training students just for the domestic labour market so far, but this focus is no longer sufficient due to globalisation. In other words, there is an urgent requirement for qualified English language proficiency, specifically standard grammar and vocabulary knowledge for local Vietnamese petroleum engineers.

6. CONTEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE

The findings from the company data and university data revealed that there were misalignments regarding contextual knowledge between workplace communication needs in the two petroleum companies and EPE provision at BVU. The data from interviews, document analysis and audio recordings of daily calls in the two companies showed that all the three kinds of contextual knowledge including participant knowledge, global, institutional and organisational knowledge, and social action knowledge were employed by the petroleum engineers in both companies in their workplace communication. However, the university data revealed that among the three types, only field, one aspect of global, institutional and organisational knowledge, was taught in the EPE course at BVU. This aspect was only implicitly presented to the EPE students, since it was not mentioned as a teaching objective in the teaching proposal of this course. Although the other aspects of global, institutional and organisational knowledge such as activities, culture, operational objectives and procedures, policies, company practice, crucial incidents, and in/out group members were adopted by the petroleum engineers in their workplace communication, these aspects were excluded in the EPE course.

Regarding participant knowledge, the petroleum engineers utilised knowledge about their communicating participants such as age, career history, job profile, status, national culture, competence profile, capacities and character in their email and call communication. However, none of these aspects were taught to the EPE students at BVU. All the university participants confirmed that participant knowledge was given scant attention to in their EPE course. This was also found in regard to social action knowledge. In the workplace, the petroleum engineers used some aspects of social action knowledge, such as cultural considerations, discourse community alignment, improvisation, expressions of trust, humour and expression of respect in their emails and daily calls. Similar to participant knowledge, none of the aspects of social action knowledge, especially the six aspects used by the petroleum engineers, were taught to the EPE students. This indicates that although contextual knowledge played an important role in the workplace communication of petroleum engineers in the two petroleum companies, insufficient attention was paid to such kind of knowledge in the EPE course at BVU.

Excluding contextual knowledge in the EPE course, this course focused on providing the EPE students with textual knowledge including technical words, reading and translating technical documents and describing a process. The academic coordinator and the EPE teacher considered that these kinds of knowledge combined with “communication skills” training received in previous general English courses could support the EPE students to function well in workplace communication. These communication skills in the general English courses, in fact, refer to textual knowledge, including the four English macro skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Hông, 2008; Vu, 2015). In other words, the EPE students were equipped only with textual knowledge in preparation for their workplace communication.

Nonetheless, a review of the literature points out that workplace communication is complex and may involve many different communication situations (Huhta et al., 2013). As has just been described above, the petroleum engineers in the two petroleum companies used not only textual knowledge but also participant knowledge, global, institutional and organisational knowledge, and social action knowledge. Accordingly, it seems that textual knowledge alone was not enough to support EPE students to function effectively in their future complex workplace contexts. This point strongly suggests that the EPE course should be specific to workplace contexts, which means that both textual and contextual knowledge should be included in the EPE curriculum.

Moreover, equipping the EPE students with contextual knowledge is in accordance with the recruiting criteria of current employers throughout the world (GMAC, 2015). The EPE course, in focusing only on teaching textual knowledge, was insufficient to ensure that the EPE graduates would be employed. Therefore, including contextual knowledge in the EPE course would be beneficial. Given that contextual knowledge is necessary for the two petroleum companies, this underlines the importance of a needs-based approach to EPE curriculum design to better serve communication needs in these workplace contexts. The literature revealed that the task-based needs analysis suggested by Huhta et al. (2013) is the most suitable approach.

To sum up, the EPE course at BVU misaligned with workplace communication needs regarding both textual and contextual knowledge. While textual knowledge, participant knowledge, global, institutional and organisational knowledge, and social action knowledge were utilised by the petroleum engineers to communicate effectively in their companies, the EPE curriculum at BVU only focused on teaching textual knowledge, but even only on the text levels, to prepare EPE students for their workplace communication. This highlights a misalignment between the university and company sites.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to gain an alignment with the workplace communication needs, the EPE curriculum should involve all the four kinds of knowledge and soft skills instead of teaching soft skill in a separate class. Then, authenticity should be attained in the EPE class to expose

the EPE students to the workplace contexts by employing more role-plays, more simulations...i.e. using authentic workplace data and materials to develop activities and materials for EPE courses. Finally, BVU should have some interaction with the petroleum industry to build alignment. Petroleum experts could be invited to the university to get involved in the design and delivery of the EPE course. Furthermore, the teachers should also go to the companies to see what happens there. In addition, BVU should have needs analysis in the petroleum companies to identify what are really necessary for workplace communication to adjust their EPE curriculum. Experiential learning opportunities like units of internship should be also provided to the EPE students.

8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the current study aimed to find out the extent to which ESP curriculum in Vietnamese universities is aligned with workplace communication needs. A qualitative study design was utilised by comprising document analysis, interviews, audio recordings of situations on the telephone and classroom observations. The data was collected in two workplace settings and a university. The findings indicate a misalignment of workplace communication needs and university ESP curricula and assessment. Recommendations for bettering the EPE curriculum at BVU are also presented in the study, including involving both textual and contextual knowledge in the curriculum, gaining authenticity in the EPE class and having close interaction between BVU and petroleum companies in training. Last but not least, this study contributes to solving the ongoing problem of ESP, i.e., the disconnection between workplace communication needs and academic courses, especially in Vietnam, which is prioritising English as the language best placed to contribute to ongoing industrialisation, modernisation and integration.

REFERENCES

1. Akbari Z. (2014). The role of grammar in second language reading comprehension: Iranian ESP context. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 98: 122-126.
2. Bhatia V, Anthony L and Noguchi J. (2011). Esp in the 21st century: Esp theory and application today.
3. Billett S. (1996). Towards a model of workplace learning: The learning curriculum. *Studies in Continuing Education* 18: 43-58.
4. Boswood T. (1999). Redefining the professional in international professional communication. In: Levitt CR and Goswami D (eds) *Exploring the Rhetoric of International Professional Communication: An Agenda for Teachers and Researchers*. Amitville, N.Y: Baywood Publishing Company Inc., 110-128.
5. Bui TTL. (2016). Designing an ESP reading syllabus for students of electronics and telecommunication at the people's police university of technology and logistics. Đại học quốc gia Hà nội.
6. Dan Anh. (2016). Biến khó khăn thách thức thành cơ hội [Turn challenges into opportunities]. *Đài tiếng nói nhân dân Hồ Chí Minh*. Vietnam: VOI1.
7. Dang TT. (2010). Learner autonomy in EFL studies in Vietnam: A discussion from sociocultural perspective. *English Language Teaching* 3: 3-9.

8. Do TH. (2012). Designing an ESP reading syllabus for the students of land management and use at Bac Giang University of Agriculture and Forestry. Hanoi, Vietnam: Vietnam National University.
9. Dudley-Evans T. (1998). An overview of ESP in the 1990s. *The Japan Conference on English for Specific Purposes*. Aizuwakamatsu City, Fukushima, Japan.
10. Gablasova D. (2015). Learning technical words through L1 and L2: Completeness and accuracy of word meanings. *English for Specific Purposes* 39: 62-74.
11. GMAC. (2015). Corporate recruiter survey report 2015. 32.
12. Hoang VV. (2008). The current situation and issues of the teaching of English in Vietnam.
13. Huhta M. (2010). Language and communication for professional purposes: Needs analysis methods in industry and business and their yield to stakeholders. *Department of Industrial Engineering and Management*. Finland: Helsinki University of Technology.
14. Huhta M, Vogt K and Tulkki H. (2013). *Needs analysis for language course design: A holistic approach to ESP*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
15. Hutchinson T and Waters A. (1987). *English for specific purposes*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
16. İlin G, Kutlu Ö and Kutluay A. (2013). An action research: Using videos for teaching grammar in an ESP class. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 70: 272-281.
17. Le QX. (2013). Fostering learner autonomy in language learning in tertiary education: An intervention study of university students in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. University of Nottingham.
18. Mai NK and Iwashita N. (2012). A comparison of learners' and teachers' attitudes towards communicative language teaching at two universities in Vietnam. *University of Sydney Papers in TESOL* 7: 25-49.
19. Mohamed AA, Radzuan NRM, Kassim H, et al. (2014). Conceptualizing English workplace communication needs of professional engineers: The challenges for English language tertiary educators. *International Journal of Contemporary Business Management* 1.
20. Nation ISP and Newton J. (1997). Teaching vocabulary. *Second language vocabulary acquisition*: 238-254.
21. Ngo NTH. (2015). Some insights into listening strategies of learners of English as a foreign language in Vietnam. *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 28: 311-326.
22. Nguyễn HHH. (2016). Designing an ESP speaking syllabus for administrative police students at intermediate level at people's police college. *Đại học quốc gia Hà nội*.
23. Nguyen TTH and Pham TTM. (2016). Difficulties in teaching English for specific purposes: Empirical study at Vietnam universities. *Higher Education Studies* 6: 154.
24. Nguyen VK. (2015). Towards improving ESP teaching/learning in Vietnam's higher education institutions: Integrating project-based learning into ESP courses. *International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics* 1.
25. Praise S and Meenakshi K. (2015). Importance of grammar in communication. *International Journal of Research Studies in Language Learning* 4: 97-101.
26. So-mui FL and Mead K. (2000). An analysis of English in the workplace: The communication needs of textile and clothing merchandisers. *English for Specific Purposes* 19: 351 - 368.
27. Tangpijajikul M. (2014). Preparing business vocabulary for the ESP classroom. *RELC Journal* 45: 51-65.
28. Tran LVC. (2015a). Content and language integrated learning approach in designing an English coursebook for police investigators at the people's police university in Vietnam. *KMUTT Journal of Language Education* 20: 30-38.

29. Tran TT. (2013). Limitation on the development of skills in higher education in Vietnam. *Higher Education* 65: 631-644.
30. Tran TT. (2015b). *Graduate employability in Vietnam: A loose relationship between higher education and employment market*, Hamburg: Anchor Academic Publishing.
31. Vu TIV. (2015). English as a lingua franca in the Vietnamese hotel industry: Communicative strategies and their implications for vocational education. *School of Education*. Curtin University.

Appendix A

A list of typical language/communication situations and genres in two petroleum companies in Vietnam

Language/communication situations	Dominant genres
1. Reading manuals, procedures and guidelines for technical issues in petroleum industry	Technical manuals, procedures, guidelines
2. Writing technical emails to supervisors, colleagues and vendors	Emails
3. Making telephone calls to Vietnamese and foreign colleagues and partners, vendors for technical issues between offshore and onshore	Telephone calls
4. Explaining a technical process with colleagues or externals like partners / vendors	Emails, telephone calls, Reports, presentations
5. Having discussions concerning technical details, installations, maintenance with foreign colleagues, partners, service providers or vendors	Meetings, telephone calls, emails
6. Analysing and solving technical problems	Emails, telephone calls, and reports, presentations
7. Writing daily, weekly, monthly and annual reports, writing technical documents	Reports, technical procedures, technical guidelines
8. Reading company documentation (e.g., policy, regulation)	Company policies, company regulations
9. Giving a presentation on technical issues	Presentations
10. Participating in meetings and morning/afternoon calls	Meetings, telephone calls
11. Meeting social situations (e.g., introductions, small talks)	Meetings, press, small talks
12. Contacting service providers, vendors	Emails, face-to-face talks, telephones
13. Talking about oneself and one's job, e.g., in meetings (offshore)	Individual talks
14. Hosting visitors/Participating in visits	Presentations, small talks