



The Effectiveness of GST “Use of English” Courses in Meeting Learners’ Needs in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the perceptions of students on the effectiveness of GST Use of English courses in meeting learners’ needs in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The study was based on the ESP needs analysis framework and the researcher set an acceptance criterion value of 3.0 for the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design with statistical inferences. The population of the study consisted of 400 final year students from 2025/2026 academic session. The data were analyzed using mean, anvbcd standard deviation. The results of the study indicated that the extent to which GST in English Language contents meet the various learners’ specific career needs across all fields is moderately high. It also revealed that GST in English Language emphasizes grammatical rules or instructions rather than communicative and task based instructions and learning materials are relatively authentic and relevant to the learners’ field of study. Following these findings, the study concluded that the contents of GST in English Language meet the learners’ specific career needs but filled with high level of grammar-instruction and relatively high learning materials and classroom activities that are authentic and relevant to the their field of study. It therefore recommended, among others that lecturers of GST in English Language in Nigerian higher institutions should focus more on discipline specific communication-based instructions rather than grammar-based instruction to reflect the communicative realities of students’ career goals.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, Use of English, Communicative Needs, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Communicative Competence skills.

INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is specialized and has distinct discipline. ESP course is developed based on an assessment of purposes and needs and the activities for which English is needed (Rahman 2015). It involves training or developing the communicative competence of the learners according to their needs and field of study, especially at the tertiary level for students. And in exploring the communicative needs of learners especially at the tertiary level, the issue of needs analysis is important and highly necessary. This is because needs analysis is a vital prerequisite for developing a course because it forms a rational basis for all the other components of a systematic language curriculum (Li &Lu 2011). Its importance in curriculum design cannot be over emphasized.

Needs analysis helps with information that serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the learning needs of a particular group of students (Li &Lu 2011, Brown 2001). This is what Brindley (1989) described as the distance between what is (present situation) which focuses on students’ needs at the end of a language course and what should be (target situation) which concerns the final results of satisfactory teaching (evaluation). This is where the university’s role in producing graduates in various fields to fulfill the social development and market demands does not only focus on academic achievement, but develop an ideal curriculum that meets the learners’ needs and market demands to the largest extent possible.

In meeting these needs, the tertiary institutions, students are required to study The Use of English as a general course in the first two years. The Use of English as a course is designed to improve students' competence for academic purposes, with focus on grammar, comprehension, writing, and communication for current academic



pursuits and future employment opportunities. The question now is if they are actually meeting the purpose or the lecturers are not well equipped.

Statement Of The Problem

Living in a bilingual/multilingual society such as Nigeria where English Language is the official language of business, education and governance has given a rise to demand for employees with English language generic skills. And the importance of these skills cannot be over emphasized as employers seek for graduates who are confident with good cohesion and clarity in their communicative skills. These communicative skills especially in a multi lingua society like Nigeria are believed to help facilitate sharing of information between people of diverse cultural and ethnicity for its commercial benefits. One then, sees the reason why English Language has become the most important subject across schools for all students. It is also no longer news that tertiary institutions now make it a compulsory and general study for all students especially in their first and second year in the institution, with the aim to meet the principles of English for Specific Purposes.

Yet, these students still demonstrate poor communicative competence in academic environment. Truly, many students pass these GST courses with good grades but still struggle to write projects, reports, deliver presentations, especially in their field of study. It does reveals that there is definitely a gap between what GST courses teach and what learners needs entail in respect to their field of study. Although, NUC proposes a shift to English for Academic /Professional Purposes EAP/EPP, there are still limited empirical studies on how far the current GST courses deviate from the core English for Specific Purposes. This, thus gives rise to investigate if the courses meet the core principles of English for Specific Purposes.

Research Questions

The following questions are raised for the purpose of this study.

1. To what extent does the GST Use of English contents meet the various learners' specific career needs across all fields?
2. To what extents are grammar-instruction, communication instructions, classroom activities and learning materials authentic and relevant to the learners' field of study?

Design of the Study

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The quantitative analysis was used to collect data from students using structured questionnaires to test the research questions.

Population of the Study

The study population comprises of all non English major final year students who had completed all the English Language GST courses in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample is made up of 4,571 undergraduate students drawn from final year students across all faculties. Stratified random sampling of 3 departments was used to cover Engineering, Law, Social Sciences while simple random sampling of students from departmental registers with a total of 400 students.

Research Instrument

The research instrument for this study was structured questionnaire. This was a 10-item structured questionnaire which consisted of items related to each research questions.



Validity of the Instrument

Face and content validity were established by 3 experts: 2 lecturers from English Department and 1 from Measurement & Evaluation in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot test was conducted on 40 students who were not part of the main sample. Cronbach's Alpha was used to test internal consistency. Overall Alpha = 0.82. Since all values > 0.70, the instrument was reliable.

Method of Data Collection

Ethical approval was obtained from the departments. Research assistants were trained for 2 hours on questionnaire administration. Questionnaires were administered during classes with permission from lecturers. It took 15-20 minutes. 400 copies were distributed, 387 were retrieved and 375 were usable = 93.75% return rate.

Method of Data Analysis

Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions 1-4: Decision rule: Mean ≥ 3.0 = "Agree/High extent", Mean < 3.0 = "Disagree/Low extent". The analysis was done with the application of a computer soft-ware programme: statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 26.

Ethical Considerations

All participants gave their consents before answering the questionnaire. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained. No names were required on questionnaires.

Presentation of Results

Research Question One: To what extent does the GST Use of English contents meet the various learners' specific career needs across all fields?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the extent to which the GST Use of English contents meet the various learners' specific career needs across all fields in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

S/N	Dimension of GST Contents	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Interpretation
1	English as major course for non-English major departments.	375	3.26	.462	1 st	High
2	Communicative ability (presentations, etc).	375	3.21	.515	2 nd	High
3	Interpretation skills	375	3.18	.436	3 rd	High
4	Lecturer's adequate knowledge of learners' field.	375	3.16	.424	4 th	High
5	Communicative competence than grammar rules.	375	3.13	.379	5 th	High
	Grand Mean	375	3.19	.443		High

Table 1 presents a summary of students' perceptions of GST Use of English contents meeting their specific careers in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The results show a grand mean of **3.19 (SD = .443)**, indicating



that GST contents of Use of English meeting specific career needs were highly prevalent in the sampled departments of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, with English as major course for non-English major departments as the most prominent dimension. The relatively lower mean for communicative competence over grammar indicates a need for additional speaking-focused activities such as role-plays, dialogues, and presentations to further enhance students' English proficiency.

Research Question Two: To what extents are grammar-instruction, communication instructions, task reading texts, activities and learning materials the authentic and relevant to the learners' field of study?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the relevance authenticity of grammar-instruction, communication instructions, task reading texts, activities and learning materials to the learners' field of study in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Grammar-instruction	375	3.18	.651	Agreed
Reading texts	375	3.15	.547	High
Learning materials	375	3.28	.739	High
Classroom activities	375	3.32	.624	High
Communication instructions task	375	3.27	.516	High
Total	375	17.63	3.58	High

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation scores of the relevance authenticity of grammar-instruction, communication instructions, task reading texts, activities and learning materials to the learners' field of study in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The findings indicate that the grammatical instructions were authentic and highly relevant while classroom based activities and communication instructions tasks are relatively high, construct grammatically acceptable expressions and communicate their ideas effectively.

Discussion of Findings

GST Use of English contents and learners' specific career needs across all fields

Research question one examined the extent to which the GST Use of English contents meet the various learners' specific career needs across all fields. The findings of this study revealed that the extent to which GST Use of English contents meet the various learners' specific career needs across all fields is high. The mean scores obtained for the five variables of the GST contents indicated that students believed they experienced moderate to high levels of satisfaction during English Language lessons. This suggests that GST Use of English does not adequately provide opportunities for learners to participate actively in classroom communication, interact with their teachers.

The finding is consistent with the study of Rahman (2015) who explained that ESP course is developed based on an assessment of purposes and needs and the activities for which English is needed. Similarly, it aligns with the submissions of Li & Lu (2011), Brown (2001), Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Ukamaka and Onuegwunwoke (2026) and Nwokolo (2020) that when language instruction aligns with disciplinary communication needs, students experience significant improvements not only in vocabulary and writing skills but also in confidence, participation, and professional.



Grammar-instruction, communication instructions, task reading texts, activities and learning materials the authentic and relevant to the learners' field of study

The findings of the study revealed the extents to which grammar-instruction, communication instructions, reading texts, classroom activities and learning materials are authentic and relevant to the learners' field of study.

The results showed that the students reported that GST Use of English course authenticity and relevance of grammar-instruction, communication instructions, classroom activities and learning materials are relatively high mean scores in relation to their fields of study. The relatively high performance in may be attributed to the emphasis placed grammatical rules or instructions rather than communicative and task based instructions which would have helped build the learners in real life situations. Classroom teaching and school-based assessments often focus on grammatical correctness, sentence construction, and vocabulary development because these areas are extensively examined examinations. Consequently, students receive more practice in grammatical structures and vocabulary development than in spontaneous communication tasks.

This aligns with the submission of Akinola and Adedokun (2022), who found that contextualized ESP lessons improved professional discourse mastery. Similarly, Ezenwa-Ohaeto (2024) noted that inclusive ESP practices include communicative playing field by giving all learners tools to express disciplinary knowledge confidently". Ukamaka and Onuegwunwoke (2026) noted that the use of task-based learning contributed to higher engagement, particularly among students from underprivileged backgrounds. It also aligns with the submission of Yusuf and Muodumogu (2018) that students' English achievement improved when they participated actively in communicative classroom interaction.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrated that GST curriculum filled with grammatical instructions for learners' needs based on their fields alone is insufficient to produce measurable improvements in students' communicative competence. Rather, the development of communicative competence appears to be influenced by a combination of instructional, learner-related, lecturer's adequate knowledge, relevant and authentic learning materials, classroom activities and most importantly communicative instructions. These may include frequency of communication practice, instructional resources, and opportunities for authentic communication.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. GST Use of English lecturers in Nigerian universities should focus more on discipline specific communication instructions in the classroom.
2. GST Use of English lecturers should deliberately integrate communicative language activities that encourage learners to practice English regularly, receive feedback, and develop confidence in authentic communicative situations.
3. Schools should provide adequate instructional language learning resources specific to each field to support the teaching of GST Use of English.

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