

# Examining the Usefulness of an ESP Textbook for Information Technology: Learner Perspectives

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**Abstract**—Many English for Specific Purposes (ESP) textbooks are distributed globally as the content development is often obliged to compromises between commercial and pedagogical demands. Therefore, the issue of regional application and usefulness of globally published ESP textbooks has received much debate. For ESP instructors, textbook selection is definitely a priority consideration for curriculum design. An appropriate ESP textbook can facilitate teaching and learning, while an inappropriate one may cause a disaster for both teachers and students. This study aims to investigate the regional application and usefulness of an ESP textbook for information technology (IT). Participants were 51 sophomores majoring in Applied Informatics and Multimedia at a university in Taiwan. As they were non-English majors, their English proficiency was mostly at elementary and elementary-to-intermediate levels. This course was offered for two semesters. The textbook selected was *Oxford English for Information Technology*. At class end, the students were required to complete a survey comprising five choices of *Very Easy, Easy, Neutral, Difficult, and Very Difficult* for each item. Based on the content design of the textbook, the survey investigated how the students viewed the difficulty of grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing materials of the textbook. In terms of difficulty, results reveal that only 22% of them found the grammar section difficult and very difficult. For listening, 71% responded difficult and very difficult. For general reading, 55% responded difficult and very difficult. For speaking, 56% responded difficult and very difficult. For writing, 78% responded difficult and very difficult. For advanced reading, 90% reported difficult and very difficult. These results indicate that, except the grammar section, more than half of the students found the textbook contents difficult in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing materials. Such contradictory results between the easy grammar section and the difficult four language skills sections imply that the textbook designers do not well understand the English learning background of regional ESP learners. For the participants, the learning contents of the grammar section were the general grammar level of junior high school, while the learning contents of the four language skills sections were more of the levels of college English majors. Implications from the findings are obtained for instructors and textbook designers. First of all, existing ESP textbooks for IT are few and thus textbook selections for instructors are insufficient. Second, existing globally published textbooks for IT cannot be applied to learners of all English proficiency levels, especially the low level. With limited textbook selections, third, instructors should modify the selected textbook contents or supplement extra ESP materials to meet the proficiency level of target learners. Fourth, local ESP publishers should collaborate with local ESP instructors who understand best the learning background of their students in order to develop appropriate ESP textbooks for local learners. Even though the instructor reduced learning contents and simplified tests in curriculum design, in conclusion, the students still found difficult. This implies that in

addition to the instructor's professional experience, there is a need to understand the usefulness of the textbook from learner perspectives.

**Keywords**—ESP textbooks, ESP materials, ESP textbook design, learner perspectives on ESP textbooks.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**M**ATERIALS used in language learning are the elements that scaffold learners in the process of understanding language use. Through the process of understanding language use via materials, learners can follow to practice language in contexts. Thus, materials selection and design are one of the vital curriculum plans. For ESP courses, it is even more crucial and difficult to select and design ESP materials because they are particularly needs-specific courses for specific group of learners. Accordingly, the purposes of ESP materials depend on the purposes of course objectives and learner needs. Today, many ESP textbooks are distributed globally rather than regionally. The content development for globally distributed textbooks is often obliged to more compromises between commercial and pedagogical demands. Therefore, the issue of regional application and usefulness of globally published ESP textbooks has received much debate [1]-[4]. For ESP instructors, textbook selection is definitely a priority consideration for curriculum design. An appropriate ESP textbook can facilitate teaching and learning, while an inappropriate one may cause a disaster for both teachers and students.

In Taiwan, available English textbooks for IT are from foreign and local publishers, less than 10 publishers in total. In consideration of course objectives, teaching hours, and learner proficiency levels, thus, selections of commercially published textbooks for IT are still few. Limited to few selections and time considerations, most instructors inevitably adopt existing commercial textbooks. However, to what extent existing commercial textbooks are suitable for regional ESP learners is an issue.

This study aims to investigate the regional application and usefulness of an ESP textbook for IT. Through learner perspectives, this study examined how the students viewed the difficulty of grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing materials of the textbook. Moreover, which components of the materials of each language skill were difficult for the students. Finally, the overarching goal of the study is to analyze the problems of the ESP textbook and find solutions to improve them.

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## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Concerning ESP materials selection, the literature has widely discussed. Most of the issues surround ready-made or tailor-made materials [5]-[7], general or subject-specific materials [7]-[9], authenticity [6], [10]-[11], and needs analysis [12]-[14]. How these issues are addressed is described in the following.

### A. Ready-Made vs. Tailor-Made Materials

Ready-made published materials and tailor-made materials have been extensively discussed as both have their advantages and disadvantages.

For ready-made published textbooks, characteristics and advantages have been well identified. First of all, published textbooks are designed and produced by a group of ESP specialists in terms of teamwork and financial support from publishers. It is time-efficient and cost-saving in material development [15]. Under the development of professional teams, published textbooks provide well-shaped sections and a greater degree of internal coherence [16] and are often believed to have more credibility [17]. They can serve as effective resources for self-directed learning, presentation materials, and syllabi for less experienced teachers to plan [15], [18]. In addition, textbooks not only provide a scaffold for teachers to develop a more creative methodology [19] but also give a clear framework where teachers and students are in the process of teaching and learning. By using textbooks to learn new materials, review and monitor progresses, students become more autonomous and less teacher-dependent [15]. For students, a textbook is like a road map of the course from which students know what to expect and what is expected, giving them psychological security [20]. Nevertheless, problems of published textbooks have also been found. Major problems are as follows. As Kuo [6] pointed out, published textbooks mostly appeal to a large market. Such textbooks cannot fully consider cultural and social appropriateness of local classroom use. Thus, it is often found that generic commercially published materials do not always respond to specific needs of target learners [21]. Beside, most published textbooks do not revise frequently and extensively, so whether the textbook is up-to-date in content, approach, and methodology in order to meet latest professional areas and contexts is an issue [16].

In contrast to ready-made textbooks, the major disadvantages for the teacher to design tailor-made materials are time-consuming, uneconomical, limited resources and facilities [5], [6]. Despite the disadvantages, teacher-generated materials have some merits. The teacher can design more appropriate ESP materials suitable for the students by considering course length, learner proficiency levels, and learning contexts [8]. To solve the drawbacks of tailor-made materials, the teacher may investigate which published textbooks currently available in the market and understand the content design of these textbooks in order to make initial selections. Through adapting ready-made published materials, the teacher may modify materials, choose appropriate volumes, and simplify contents to suit specific needs of particular learner groups [5], [6]. If time allows for teachers, this approach can

receive both advantages of published textbooks and tailor-made materials.

### B. General vs. Subject-Specific Materials

In terms of content design, there are two kinds of materials for ESP teachers to adopt: general materials and subject-specific materials. General materials primarily help learners develop the general ability to communicate more effectively, while subject-specific materials focus on a particular job or industry area [22].

The perspective of using general materials was often referred to as a wide-angled perspective. Those who advocated this perspective contended with the following reasons. Compared with subject specialists, language teachers who generally lack the expertise and confidence should leave specific contents to subject specialists and focus more on the general principles of inquiry and rhetoric. For students at lower levels of English proficiency, second, they need to acquire general English suitable for all contexts first. Third, it is believed that generic skills and language forms are transferable across disciplines, professions, or purposes [23].

Regarding the issue of general and subject-specific materials, two basic concerns are raised. As Vičič [8] indicated, one is that whether ESP materials should be solely or primarily subject-specific. The other is that what the most appropriate ratio of general materials to subject-specific materials is. When carefully selected, both kinds of materials can reach similar effects on the learning of knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, subject-specific materials better target learners' specific needs, as this kind of materials are considered to better address individual learners with different needs, styles, and interests.

In evaluating textbook selections, Daoud and Celce-Murcia [24] listed subject matter as one of five selection guidelines. This states the significance of subject matter to ESP materials because subject-specific materials can better facilitate the learning of the subject matter. Lesiak-Bielawska [5] also pointed out that for younger subject areas like logistics, shortage of subject-specific materials would prevent ESP teachers from applying available textbooks which are well-grounded in research and replete with authentic target community or workplace data.

While arguing over whether ESP teachers should be experts in the subject area or just language teachers, additionally, a positive suggestion for the latter is that using subject-matter textbooks can better equip language teachers with subject-specific knowledge and effectively facilitate language teachers in teaching the subject matter [8]. According to the literature, it seems to generally acknowledge that subject-specific materials better equip ESP teachers and cater for individual learners with various needs.

Since the 1960s, in summary, the debating foci of specificity have evolved over various stages. During the 1960s and 1970s, it was believed that ESP materials relevant to a specific domain, learners' needs and interests were more effective and more motivating. This was a narrow-angled perspective. In the 1980s, the concept of specificity shifted to the learning situation and learners' transferable skills. In addition to accommodate

learners' specific needs, the domain-specific concept has been extended to be interdisciplinary since the 1990s. For instance, medical terms should be included for an accountant working in the healthcare area [25]. From this point of view, the evolution of domain-specific concept has gradually reflected more career reality.

### *C. Authenticity*

Authenticity of materials has been an important issue discussed. Several questions have been frequently raised. For instance, what does "authenticity" mean? Should it be defined in terms of authentic content or authentic use in contexts [6], [26]? What are the criteria for evaluating authenticity [6]? What are the advantages and disadvantages of authentic materials [11]?

Regarding the definition, the term "authentic materials" has been referred to as language samples in both oral and written modes, naturally language forms used in real-world contexts. Instead of artificially produced textbooks simply for teaching, authentic materials are made for a real communicative purpose [5], [6]. Nevertheless, it has also been argued that the presence of authentic materials in the classroom does not definitely assure authenticity. Once authentic materials are taken away from the context through which they can be genuinely carried out, they lose the function of authenticity [26]. Hence, Kuo [6] emphasized that connecting with real-world contexts in material use can best foster successful transfer of language use and communication skills. In brief, what means by authenticity is that only when a learner interacts with materials or does tasks in authentic ways and contexts [26], authentic materials can just arrive at substantial meanings and functions.

In the literature, there are two opposite points of view toward whether ESP materials should be authentic. The major perspective favoring for authentic materials is that non-authentic materials cannot reflect real-world language use [6], [11]. Authentic materials can greatly facilitate role-play, simulation, problem-solving, project-based learning, case-based learning, and gaming methodology. Through using authentic materials as a means, it can link classroom learning to the real world in which students will eventually use the language acquired in the classroom [27]. On the contrary, the major viewpoint against authentic materials is that authentic texts may not always be authentic for a specific class as authentic texts do not mean they are relevant for any specific class [11]. In some circumstances, authentic materials are not always necessary and at times they might be a burden for teachers [28]. To reduce the confusion between authenticity and relevance, Kuo [6] suggested that authenticity of ESP materials should be considered in terms of the following factors: environments, learning situations, learner characteristics, learning objectives, material and human resources, suitable proficiency levels, expert knowledge, learning purposes, and the learning styles of the learners. Additionally, it is noted that authentic materials should aim at introducing information in shape of accessible input not specifically for EFL learners but for current specialists or apprentices of certain fields like medicine and engineering [29]. Its purpose is to expose learners

to genuine career knowledge and contexts.

From the literature, some myths of authentic materials have thus gradually clarified.

### *D. Needs Analysis*

Materials selection and design cannot depend on the teacher's perspective alone, target learners' perspectives are crucial to determine appropriate materials, especially for ESP learners. In other words, ESP learners' needs analysis can well inform the teacher many learning aspects of target learners.

Speaking of needs analysis, it is more than investigating the gap between learners' current and target language competencies. The in-depth information that the teacher needs in order to understand the ESP learners covers learners' professional and linguistic backgrounds, preferred learning styles, learning strategies, motivation, and willingness to participate in classes, do homework, and commitment to learning [30]. These kinds of information allow the teacher to make deficiency analysis or ongoing ethnographic needs analysis [5]. In fact, ESP teachers often encounter the knowledge of specialized areas such as medical and law professions in which they have not been trained. Accordingly, developing meaningful language materials both appropriate for language level and relevant to the learning context becomes a challenge for ESP teachers. Under such circumstances, needs-responsive materials derived from needs analysis may greatly facilitate ESP teachers in materials selection and design, making the materials better used in suitable contexts [31]. Indeed, needs analysis can help the ESP teacher determine whether to design needs-specific materials or how much he or she should adapt commercially produced ones to fit various needs and goals [5]. Moreover, it can provide the information of learners' both objective and subjective needs [14] that the teacher needs to take into considerations. Outside of learner factors, nevertheless, Upton [10] noted that the needs analysis process is not necessarily objective. Socio-political, educational, and methodological components have also been involved. Therefore, the teacher needs to find a balance among these factors in conducting needs analysis.

## III. METHOD

### *A. Participants and Procedure*

Participants were 51 sophomores who majored in Applied Informatics and Multimedia at a university of technology in Taiwan. As they were not English majors, their English proficiency was mostly at elementary and elementary-to-intermediate levels. This course was entitled "English for Information Technology", a required course in the department. The course was offered for two semesters; each semester comprised 18 weeks. Weekly teaching durations were two periods at one time; 50 minutes per period. In addition to receiving lesson instructions, the participants took midterm and final exams each semester. At the end of the second semester, the participants were required to complete a survey.

### B. Instruments

The instruments included the textbook “*Oxford English for Information Technology*” (second edition) and a Likert scale survey. The textbook comprises 25 units. Each unit covers six sections: grammar, listening, speaking, general reading, writing, and advanced reading.

Due to limited teaching weeks and hours per semester as well as the learning capacities of the participants, 13 units were selected. Considering mixed and mostly lower language proficiency levels of these non-English majors, in addition, the contents of each learning section were partly reduced in each unit instruction, and test questions were also simplified to meet learner proficiency levels. Table I displays the theme of selected units.

TABLE I  
THEMES OF THE TEXTBOOK SELECTED IN THE CURRICULUM

Unit No.	Theme	Unit No.	Theme
1	Computer Users	11	Networks
2	Computer Architecture	12	The Internet
3	Computer Applications	13	The World Wide Web
4	Peripherals	16	Communications Systems
7	Graphical User Interfaces	18	Data Security
8	Applications Programs	21	Software Engineering
9	Multimedia		

The Likert scale survey questions comprise two types. One type of the questions investigated the difficulty of grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing materials. This type of questions provided five choices for each item: *Very Easy*, *Easy*, *General*, *Difficult*, and *Very Difficult*. Based on the content design of the textbook, the survey questions investigated how the participants viewed the difficulty of grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing materials of the textbook respectively.

The other type of questions was multiple choices, concerning which components of four language skills in the materials the students thought difficult. The multiple choices of components associated with four language skills cover vocabulary, grammar, speed, pronunciation, fluency, theme, length, and writing skills.

The survey questionnaire is shown in Appendix.

### IV. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data were collected from the survey which was conducted at the end of the second semester. The quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics. In order to understand the usefulness of the selected ESP textbook for IT, this study analyzed the percentages of learner perspectives toward the difficulty of grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing materials. In addition, this study also analyzed which specific components of each language skill in the materials caused difficulty for the students.

Through the descriptive statistics, this study aimed to discuss to what extent this commercially published textbook for IT was useful, and how to solve the problems to improve the usefulness of commercially published textbooks for local students.

### V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This textbook content consists of five major categories of materials: grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For reading materials, this textbook further divides them into the general reading section and the advanced reading section.

The survey investigated two kinds of questions: One kind is that how difficult they viewed the grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing materials. The other kind is that which components of the materials of four language skills they find difficult. According to the two kinds of survey questions, results are discussed respectively in the following.

#### A. The Difficulty of the Materials of Grammar and Four Language Skills

In asking how difficult the materials in the grammar section, results reveal that 20% and 2% of participants found the grammar section “Difficult” and “Very Difficult” respectively. 47% reported “Neutral.” 25% and 6% of them expressed “Easy” and “Very Easy” respectively. Table II shows statistical results.

TABLE II  
RESPONSES TO THE DIFFICULTY OF GRAMMAR MATERIALS

Item	Percentage
Very Easy	6%
Easy	25%
Neutral	47%
Difficult	20%
Very Difficult	2%

For the listening section, 47% and 24% of participants found the listening section “Difficult” and “Very Difficult” respectively. 25% reported “Neutral.” 4% and 0% of them responded “Easy” and “Very Easy” respectively. Table III shows statistical results.

TABLE III  
RESPONSES TO THE DIFFICULTY OF LISTENING MATERIALS

Item	Percentage
Very Easy	0%
Easy	4%
Neutral	25%
Difficult	47%
Very Difficult	24%

For the general reading section, 47% and 8% of participants found the general reading section “Difficult” and “Very Difficult” respectively. 41% reported “Neutral.” 4% and 0% of them expressed “Easy” and “Very Easy” respectively. Table IV shows statistical results.

TABLE IV  
RESPONSES TO THE DIFFICULTY OF GENERAL READING MATERIALS

Item	Percentage
Very Easy	0%
Easy	4%
Neutral	41%
Difficult	47%
Very Difficult	8%

For the speaking section, 49% and 7% of participants found



the speaking section “Difficult” and “Very Difficult” respectively. 20% reported “Neutral.” 22% and 2% of them expressed “Easy” and “Very Easy” respectively. Table V shows statistical results.

TABLE V  
RESPONSES TO THE DIFFICULTY OF SPEAKING MATERIALS

Item	Percentage
Very Easy	2%
Easy	22%
Neutral	20%
Difficult	49%
Very Difficult	7%

For the writing section, 49% and 29% of participants found this section “Difficult” and “Very Difficult” respectively. 20% reported “Neutral.” 2% and 0% of them expressed “Easy” and “Very Easy” respectively. Table VI shows statistical results.

TABLE VI  
RESPONSES TO THE DIFFICULTY OF WRITING MATERIALS

Item	Percentage
Very Easy	0%
Easy	2%
Neutral	20%
Difficult	49%
Very Difficult	29%

For the advanced reading section, 47% and 43% of participants found the advanced reading section “Difficult” and “Very Difficult” respectively. 10% reported “Neutral.” None of them expressed “Easy” and “Very Easy” respectively. Table VII shows statistical results.

TABLE VII  
RESPONSES TO THE DIFFICULTY OF ADVANCED READING MATERIALS

Item	Percentage
Very Easy	0%
Easy	0%
Neutral	10%
Difficult	47%
Very Difficult	43%

The above results show that, except the grammar section, more than half of the students found the textbook contents difficult in terms of listening, speaking, reading, writing materials. Such contradictory results between the easy grammar section and the difficult four language skills sections imply that the textbook designers do not well understand the English learning background of regional ESP learners. For the participants, the learning contents of the grammar section were the general grammar level of junior high school, while the learning contents of the four language skills sections were more of the levels of college English majors.

#### *B. Difficult Components of the Materials of Four Language Skills*

In further investigating which specific components of the materials of individual language skills they thought difficult, statistical results show as follows.

Regarding listening materials, Table VIII shows that 53% of the participants pointed out that “Vocabulary” was difficult. 71% of them indicated “Speed.” 55% indicated “Length.” 25% indicated “Theme.” It is found that “Speed” was the component that most students thought difficult. For non-English majors, the training of listening speed was little; thus, the speed of the audio contents was apparently too fast to follow for the students. In addition, more than half of the students found “Vocabulary” and “Length” were difficult too. These two components became two other major factors adding problems to listening comprehension.

TABLE VIII  
RESPONSES TO DIFFICULT COMPONENTS OF LISTENING MATERIALS

Item	Percentage
Vocabulary	53%
Speed	71%
Length	55%
Theme	25%

Regarding general reading materials, Table IX shows that 51% of the participants pointed out that “Vocabulary” was difficult. 41% of them indicated “Grammar.” 25% indicated “Length.” 33% indicated “Theme.”

“Vocabulary” and “Grammar” were the two components that around half of the students found difficult. Like the listening materials, shortage of vocabulary was a common problem for these non-English majors.

TABLE IX  
RESPONSES TO DIFFICULT COMPONENTS OF GENERAL READING MATERIALS

Item	Percentage
Vocabulary	51%
Grammar	41%
Length	25%
Theme	33%

Regarding speaking materials, Table X shows that 33% of the participants pointed out that “Vocabulary” was difficult. 39% of them indicated “Grammar.” 51% indicated “Pronunciation.” 57% indicated “Fluency.” More than half of the students had problems with “Pronunciation” and “Fluency.” Such results explained the situations in speaking activities - many students were afraid to speak up in class. Even though the students found vocabulary in mind but encountered the difficulty to correctly pronounce it or had no idea how to pronounce it, thus resulting in a failure of fluent output.

TABLE X  
RESPONSES TO DIFFICULT COMPONENTS OF SPEAKING MATERIALS

Item	Percentage
Vocabulary	33%
Grammar	39%
Pronunciation	51%
Fluency	57%

Regarding writing materials, Table XI shows that 45% of the participants indicated that “Vocabulary” was difficult. 64% of them indicated “Grammar.” 45% indicated “Theme.” 76%

indicated "Writing Skills."

More than half of them found "Grammar" and "Writing Skills" difficult in English writing activities. "Vocabulary" and "Theme" were also difficult to around half of the students. English writing involves various kinds of writing skills. For English majors, they require a series of writing courses to practice. For non-English majors, they have no such curriculum arrangements. Directly learning English writing in an ESP course seems too much for non-English majors. Apparently, English writing activities designed in the writing section were challenging to non-English majors.

TABLE XI  
RESPONSES TO DIFFICULT COMPONENTS OF WRITING MATERIALS

Item	Percentage
Vocabulary	45%
Grammar	64%
Theme	45%
Writing Skills	76%

Regarding advanced reading materials, Table XII shows that 82% of the participants reported that "Vocabulary" was difficult. 65% of them indicated "Grammar." 84% indicated "Length." 67% indicated "Theme."

Such results reveal that "Vocabulary" and "Length" of the advanced reading materials caused great problems to more than 80% of the students. More than half of them found "Grammar" and "Theme" difficult. According to the students' responses, these advanced reading materials were professional in terms of terminology, theme, and content. For these sophomores, a lot of professional courses were not learned yet, so both content and language were difficult to them. Thus, the advanced reading materials were not suitable for them.

TABLE XII  
RESPONSES TO DIFFICULT COMPONENTS OF ADVANCED READING MATERIALS

Item	Percentage
Vocabulary	82%
Grammar	65%
Length	84%
Theme	67%

### C. Summarized Discussions

According to statistical results, some findings were obtained as follows.

- 1) Only 22% of the students thought the grammar section difficult and very difficult, while around 50% or even more of them indicated that the grammar component of the listening, general reading, advanced reading, and writing sections was difficult. Such contradictory results reveal that in terms of grammar, the difficulty levels of material contents are inconsistent. Briefly, the exercises in the grammar section were easy like those in junior high school. When facing complex and long sentences embedded with complex grammar in the material contents, the majority of the non-English majors became poor in comprehension.
- 2) Around 50% or even more of the students responded that the vocabulary component of the listening, general reading, advanced reading, and writing sections was difficult. These

results imply that the non-English majors not only need to learn new general vocabulary but also need to learn professional vocabulary from the textbook. The amounts of simultaneously learning general and professional vocabulary were too large for them.

- 3) 71% and 55% of the students found the speed and length components of the listening materials difficult respectively. For non-English majors receiving no special listening training courses, the difficulty level of the listening materials was unsuitable for them. In addition, the instructor needed to play the audio contents to instruct English listening to the students with poor listening comprehension in the class of limited teaching time, thus receiving little learning effectiveness.
- 4) More than half of the students found the pronunciation and fluency components of the speaking materials difficult respectively. For non-English majors receiving no special speaking training courses, the speaking materials were challenging to them.
- 5) For the writing materials, 76% high of the students expressed that the writing-skills components were difficult. English writing requires specific course instructions of complex writing techniques. Without prior instructions, these students were unable to handle writing tasks in the textbook.
- 6) With high percentages of the students found all the components of the advanced reading materials difficult, it shows that the advanced reading materials did not meet the proficiency levels of the students.

In summary, the difficulty level of the textbook design was not suitable for these non-English majors of lower English proficiency levels. Without receiving specific course instructions of four language skills like English majors, such materials offer too much in learning for these non-English majors. Accordingly, three issues occur in the following.

- 1) In many EFL countries, most ESP course hours are only two periods (100 minutes) weekly. For only two-period English course per week, whether the design of all-in-one ESP textbooks including practices of all four language skills was appropriate and necessary?
- 2) Instead of covering all four language skills, which language skills should ESP courses focus more in teaching, so that non-English majors would not feel overwhelmed to deal with all language skills in a course at one time?
- 3) Most published ESP textbooks for IT cover over twenty units which definitely require two semesters to finish. For many non-English majoring programs which offer an ESP course for only one semester, it would be difficult for ESP instructors to adopt existing published ESP textbooks with many units for IT, or find published ones with fewer units.

Under the above mentioned circumstances, the usefulness of existing published all-in-one ESP textbooks for IT is thus limited for non-English majors in consideration of learner proficiency levels and instruction hours.

### VI. CONCLUSION

Selecting an ESP textbook and making it fully useful in

teaching and learning are challenging for ESP instructors. This study examined the usefulness and problems of a published ESP textbook for IT in terms of learner perspectives. Although the instructor made selected instructions of materials and simplified the examinations to meet the proficiency levels of these non-English majors, results reveal some problems of the textbook used in this course.

The research findings have provided a lot of information, but this study still had two limitations. First, the course duration was limited and thus to some extent it might affect the usefulness of the selected textbook in teaching and learning. Second, the case study applied the textbook on the EFL non-English majors of lower proficiency levels; thus, the usefulness of the textbook cannot be generalized. Whether the use of this textbook is more effective on EFL English majors or learners of higher proficiency levels requires other research. Nevertheless, several implications from the research findings have been obtained for instructors and textbook designers. First of all, existing ESP textbooks for IT are few and thus textbook selections for instructors are insufficient. Second, existing globally published textbooks for IT cannot be applied to learners of all English proficiency levels, especially lower levels. Third, covering all four language skills in an ESP textbook for IT seemed to bring about more problems in teaching and learning, especially for EFL learners of lower levels. To avoid this problem, the instructor should well consider the ESP course objectives and learner needs first in order to determine which specific language skills should be focused. With limited textbook selections, fourth, instructors should select, simply, and modify the selected textbook contents, or supplement extra ESP materials to meet the proficiency level of target learners. In addition, it is better for instructors to conduct formative assessment of teaching materials, so that the unsuitable materials originally selected or modified can be further revised to adapt learners' needs in the learning processes. Last, local ESP publishers should collaborate with local ESP instructors who understand best the learning background of their students in order to develop appropriate ESP textbooks for local learners.

Textbooks are not a panacea, so understanding whether instructor perspectives and learner perspectives on the selected textbook are identical or differentiated is crucial. Ideally, both instructor and learner perspectives should be identical or close, but in reality, they are often differentiated to some extent. Therefore, even experienced ESP instructors should carefully understand how much differentiation in between in order to achieve optimal teaching and learning effectiveness with best suitable materials. With specific findings obtained, future work can further explore the effects of using semi-ready and semi-tailored blended materials under a formative assessment.

## APPENDIX

1. For the grammar materials of this textbook, how difficult are they for you?

- ☐ Very Easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very Difficult

2a. For the listening materials of this textbook, how difficult are they for you?

- ☐ Very Easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very Difficult

2b. If your response to Q.2a is (very) difficult, please indicate which component(s)? (multiple choices).

(If your response is not (very) difficult, please skip this question.)

- ☐ Vocabulary
- ☐ Speed
- ☐ Length
- ☐ Theme

3a. For the reading materials of this textbook, how difficult are they for you?

- ☐ Very Easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very Difficult

3b. If your response to Q.3a is (very) difficult, please indicate which component(s)? (multiple choices).

(If your response is not (very) difficult, please skip this question.)

- ☐ Vocabulary
- ☐ Grammar
- ☐ Length
- ☐ Theme

4a. For the speaking materials of this textbook, how difficult are they for you?

- ☐ Very Easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very Difficult

4b. If your response to Q.4a is (very) difficult, please indicate which component(s)? (multiple choices).

(If your response is not (very) difficult, please skip this question.)

- ☐ Vocabulary
- ☐ Grammar
- ☐ Pronunciation
- ☐ Fluency

5a. For the writing materials of this textbook, how difficult are they for you?

- ☐ Very Easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very Difficult

5b. If your response to Q.5a is (very) difficult, please indicate which component(s)? (multiple choices).

(If your response is not (very) difficult, please skip this question.)

- ☐ Vocabulary
- ☐ Grammar
- ☐ Theme
- ☐ Writing Skills

6a. For the advanced reading materials of this textbook, how difficult are they for you?

- ☐ Very Easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very Difficult

6b. If your response to Q.6a is (very) difficult, please indicate which component(s)? (multiple choices).

(If your response is not (very) difficult, please skip this question.)

- ☐ Vocabulary
- ☐ Grammar
- ☐ Length
- ☐ Theme

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