

Designing an ESP Syllabus for Housewives of Kosamba Town (Gujrat): A Pragmatic Approach

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KEYWORDS ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the development of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) syllabus tailored for housewives. The paper identifies the unique linguistic and pragmatic needs of housewives, focusing on their roles within domestic and social contexts, and proposes a syllabus that enhances their language skills for personal empowerment and societal engagement. The study adopts a needs-analysis approach, utilizing surveys and interviews to gather data, and discusses the theoretical and practical implications of designing a context-specific syllabus.

Introduction

Kosamba, a small town nestled in rural Gujrat, continues to uphold traditional values and customs that deeply influence the daily lives of its residents. Although modernization is gradually making its presence felt, many housewives in Kosamba have had limited exposure to English language education. This lack of proficiency poses challenges in accessing critical information, resources, and opportunities (Dornyei & Csizer, 2002).

Housewives in Kosamba are central to managing households, raising children, and preserving cultural traditions. However, their demanding routines often leave little time to develop English language skills (Prabhu, 1987). This limitation creates barriers to obtaining essential knowledge about health, education, and personal development, while also hindering effective communication with English speakers.

As Kosamba integrates more with globalization and technology, English proficiency has become increasingly important for personal and professional growth (Graddol, 2006). Housewives who acquire English skills are better equipped to adapt to these changes, access information, and explore new avenues for self-improvement and income generation.

To address these challenges, there is a critical need for an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program designed to meet the unique needs of Kosamba's housewives. By focusing on their specific language requirements, such a program can empower them with the skills and confidence to overcome linguistic barriers and engage more fully in various aspects of life (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a branch of English language teaching that focuses on the specific needs of learners. Traditionally, ESP has been associated with fields like business, engineering, or academic purposes. However, housewives constitute a significant demographic that can benefit from an ESP syllabus. As primary caregivers and managers of households, housewives engage in diverse activities that often require functional English proficiency, including communication in multicultural environments, managing household finances, and accessing digital resources.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become a significant trend in modern English Language Teaching (ELT). It adopts a learner-centered approach, focusing on teaching a target language by enhancing communicative competence across various disciplines.

ESP is recognized as a specialized language teaching method designed to equip learners with specific objectives necessary for effective performance in their respective fields. It involves teaching English tailored to particular subjects, emphasizing the learners' specific educational and vocational goals. The content of an ESP syllabus is customized to address the specialized language repertoire required to meet the learners' distinct needs (Lauren).

This paper aims to design an ESP syllabus tailored to the unique needs of housewives, emphasizing practical language use for personal development and social interaction.

Literature Review

ESP has evolved to address the specific linguistic needs of learners in various fields (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Needs analysis, as a cornerstone of ESP syllabus design, involves identifying learners' goals, language proficiency, and contextual requirements (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). For housewives, existing studies highlight the importance of functional literacy in English for engaging with digital platforms, participating in community activities, and supporting children's education (Kaur, 2017).

The communicative approach, which prioritizes practical language use over theoretical grammar instruction, aligns well with the needs of housewives. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is another relevant framework, as it focuses on real-life tasks that learners are likely to encounter (Ellis, 2003).

Dr. Satabdi Roy (2021) describes Indian housewives as the cornerstone of society, central to the functioning of families. Being a homemaker is one of the most challenging roles, requiring immense effort without monetary compensation. According to Soutik Biswas (BBC News), approximately 160 million housewives in India dedicate most of their time to unpaid domestic work.

In Gujarat, the female literacy rate stands at 69.68% (Census 2001), which is relatively higher than in many other Indian states. Despite being educated, many housewives in Gujarat are unable to work due to their responsibilities toward their families and in-laws. However, a significant number of them aspire to engage in home-based work or online businesses. Proficiency in English could enhance their confidence and provide a valuable tool for expanding their business ventures. Additionally, many educated housewives prefer enrolling their children in English-medium schools, recognizing the growing importance of the language. While they initially manage their children's education effectively, challenges arise as the academic level increases, necessitating the need for English language training specifically for housewives.

Rumani Phukan, a writer at *Women in Business* and *Gharsenokri.com*, advocates for housewives to consider careers as Edupreneurs in the education sector. This career path offers educated women the opportunity to work from home. However, many women, particularly in South Gujarat, struggle to pursue this due to limited English proficiency, which hinders their potential to excel in such roles.

Civil Service India highlights the significant role housewives play in contributing to India's GDP. By taking on roles as in-house sellers, freelance traders, and telecommuters, housewives indirectly support economic growth. Government initiatives, such as FMGS (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods) programs, have facilitated some of these contributions, with English skills playing a crucial role in enabling housewives to participate effectively in these activities.

Research by Chirag Patel and Dr. Rakesh Patel (2016) underscores the critical role of English language proficiency in enhancing the employability of Indian women, especially housewives. Their study found that women with better English skills were more likely to secure employment

and earn higher incomes than those with limited proficiency. This emphasizes the importance of English as a means of empowering housewives to contribute to their household income and broader economic development.

Methodology

A needs analysis was conducted through surveys and interviews with 50 housewives across urban and semi-urban areas. The participants varied in educational background and socio-economic status. The analysis aimed to identify:

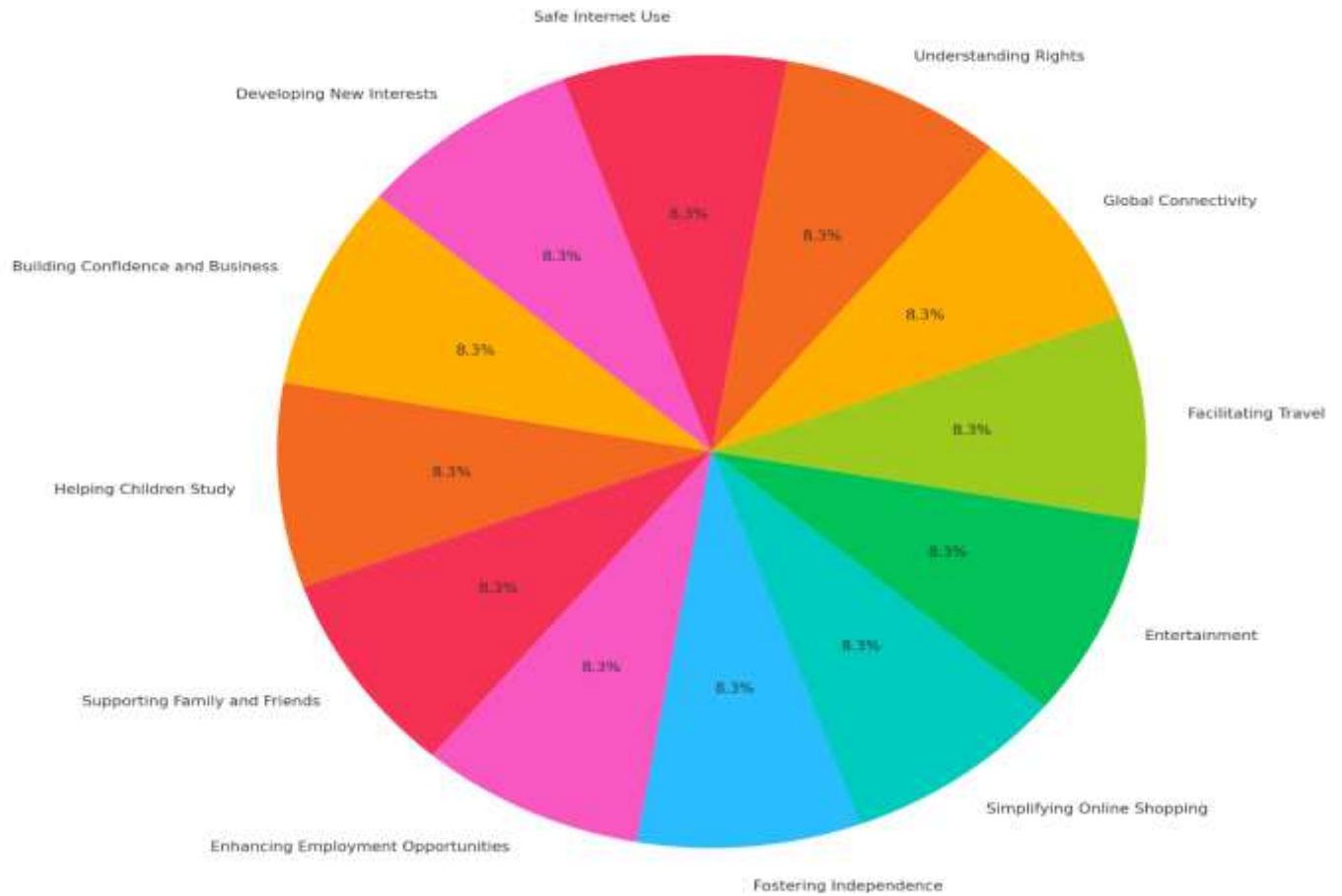
1. Common situations where English is required.
2. Current proficiency levels.
3. Specific linguistic skills needed.
4. Preferred learning methods and constraints (e.g., time, access to resources).

Findings

The needs analysis revealed the following key areas where housewives required English proficiency:

1. Common situations where English is required: -
 - 1) **Building Confidence and Business:** English boosts self-confidence, enabling housewives to interact effectively with their children's teachers, develop online businesses, and target customers across India.
 - 2) **Helping Children Study:** English proficiency helps mothers assist their children with homework and virtual classes, fostering educational success during the pandemic.
 - 3) **Supporting Family and Friends:** Learning English allows housewives to assist relatives and friends with daily tasks, inspiring others to learn the language.
 - 4) **Enhancing Employment Opportunities:** English fluency opens doors to jobs in multinational companies and roles requiring travel or participation in global events.
 - 5) **Fostering Independence:** Knowledge of English empowers housewives to run online businesses, earn independently, and boost their confidence.
 - 6) **Simplifying Online Shopping:** English helps navigate online shopping processes, including product selection, payment, delivery, and returns.
 - 7) **Entertainment:** Accessing English-language media, including movies, dramas, and books, enriches their leisure and cultural understanding.
 - 8) **Facilitating Travel:** English proficiency ensures smooth travel experiences, such as booking hotels and flights, and enhances interaction with locals during trips.
 - 9) **Global Connectivity:** English keeps housewives informed about international news, trade, politics, and scientific advancements.
 - 10) **Understanding Rights:** English empowers women to learn about their rights and stand against societal injustices in patriarchal settings.
 - 11) **Safe Internet Use:** English helps housewives navigate social media securely, protecting against online scams and maintaining privacy.
 - 12) **Developing New Interests:** English opens access to global media, podcasts, and websites, fostering creativity, hobbies, and personal growth.

Importance of English for Housewives in Various Aspects

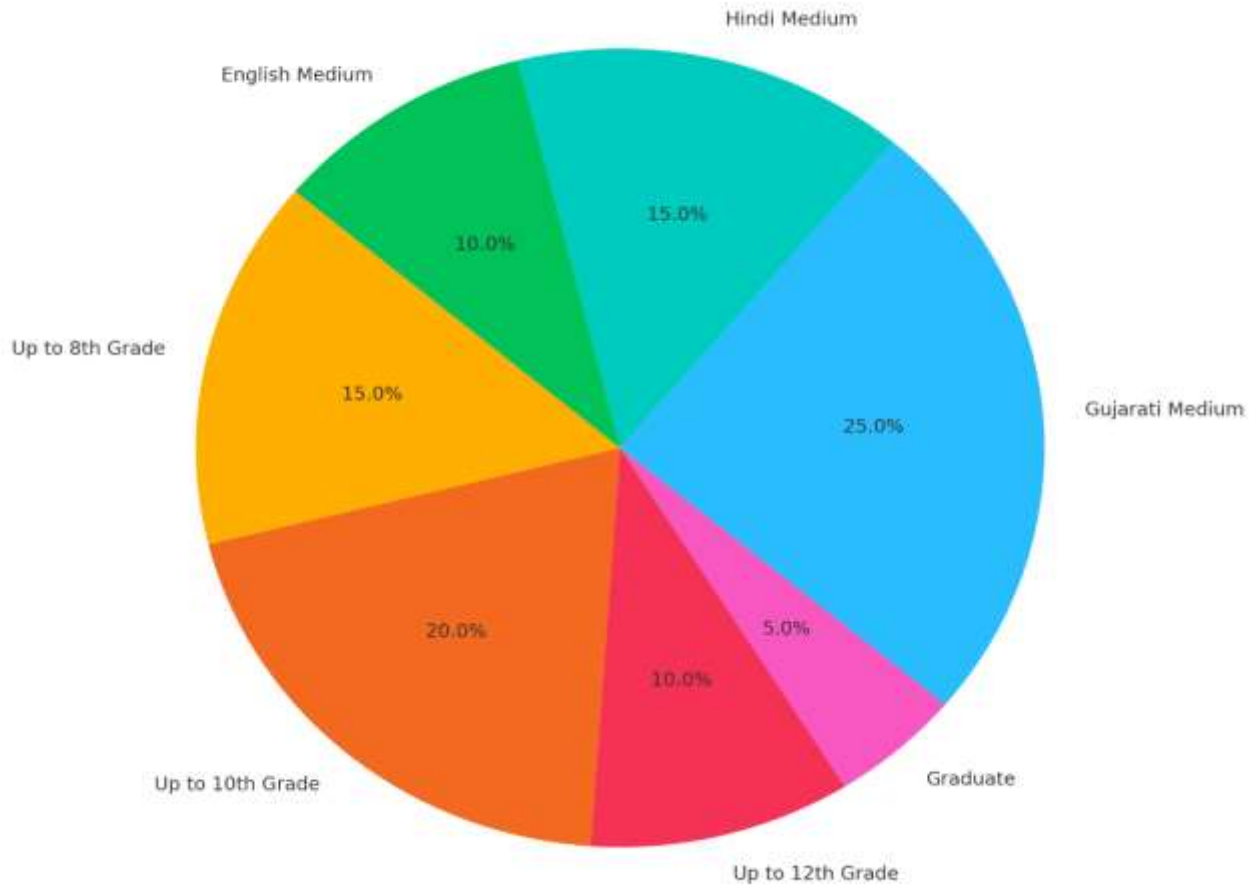


In summary, English serves as a vital tool for empowerment, education, independence, and cultural engagement for housewives in Gujarat.

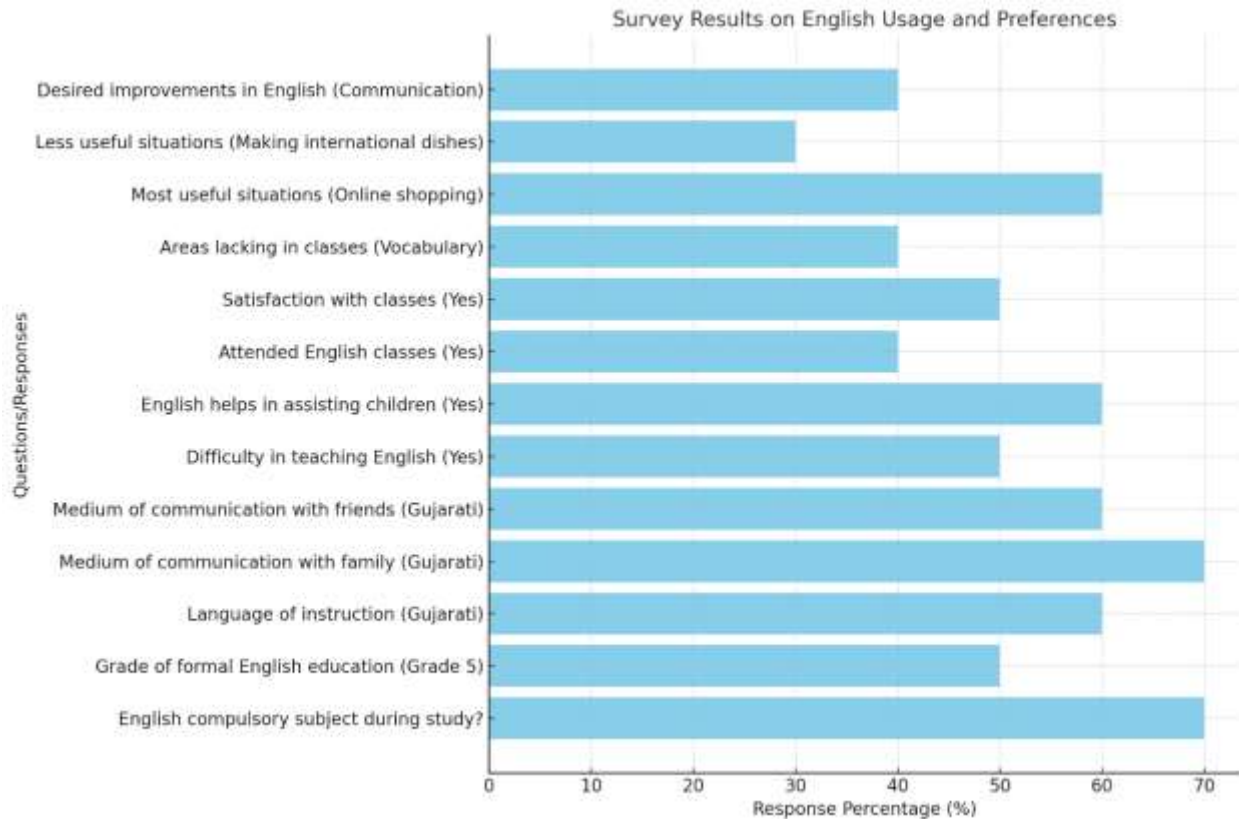
2. Current Proficiency Level

A survey was conducted to know about their educational background.

Personal Information and Educational Background



The analysis reveals that housewives in Kosamba town generally have a moderate to low level of formal English education and perceive English as challenging yet valuable in specific situations. While Gujarati remains their primary language of communication, they recognize the importance of English for online interactions and travel purposes. There is a noticeable demand for an ESP syllabus that emphasizes practical English usage, vocabulary building, and conversational skills. Designing a curriculum aligned with these needs will enhance their communication skills and address their daily requirements effectively.



Participants wish to improve their ability to communicate better (40%), enhance vocabulary (30%), and improve their grammar (30%).

Syllabus Design

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for designing an effective ESP syllabus:

1. **Focus on Communication:** Emphasize speaking and listening skills to enhance fluency and confidence in real-life scenarios.
2. **Integrated Skills Approach:** While prioritizing oral communication, incorporate all language skills to reflect their interdependence in practical usage.
3. **Authentic Content:** Use materials and activities that closely replicate real-world contexts where learners will use English.
4. **Learner-Centered Methods:** Adopt interactive, task-based learning approaches that promote active participation and peer collaboration.
5. **Cultural Understanding:** Include content that fosters awareness of English-speaking cultures and strengthens intercultural communication abilities.
6. **Flexible Learning:** Utilize blended learning methods to provide flexibility and address time constraints faced by learners.
7. **Supportive Environment:** Create a non-intimidating, encouraging learning atmosphere to build confidence among learners.
8. **Contextual Grammar Instruction:** Teach grammar in context, focusing on structures most relevant to the learners' communication needs.
9. **Targeted Vocabulary Building:** Prioritize vocabulary acquisition strategies, emphasizing high-frequency words useful for daily life.
10. **Ongoing Assessment:** Conduct regular needs assessments to adapt the syllabus as learners progress.

By incorporating these recommendations, educators can design ESP syllabi tailored to the specific needs of their target learners or fields, ensuring practical relevance and effective outcomes.

The syllabus includes the following components:

1. **Functional Language Skills:**
 - Basic grammar and vocabulary relevant to everyday tasks.
 - Pronunciation and listening skills for effective communication.
2. **Task-Based Activities:**
 - Role-playing parent-teacher meetings.
 - Simulated online shopping and banking tasks.
3. **Digital Literacy Training:**
 - Tutorials on navigating common apps and websites.
 - Writing and responding to emails and messages.
4. **Entrepreneurial Language Skills:**
 - Writing advertisements and social media posts.
 - Conversational skills for customer interaction.
5. **Flexibility and Accessibility:**
 - Modular lessons that can be conducted in short sessions.
 - Blended learning approaches, combining in-person and online instruction.

Example of an ESP Syllabus on Online Shopping

Unit 1: Introduction to Shopping

- Vocabulary: Types of shops (supermarket, boutique, pharmacy, etc.), shopping items (clothing, groceries, electronics).
- Grammar: Singular and plural nouns; “There is/There are.”
- Functions: Identifying stores and items.
- Activities:
 - Matching stores to items.
 - Listening practice: "What's in the store?"

Unit 2: Asking for Help in a Store

- Vocabulary: Sizes, colors, materials (cotton, leather, plastic), common phrases (Can I help you? I'm looking for...).
- Grammar: Question forms (What size do you need? Do you have...?).
- Functions: Asking for and giving information about products.
- Activities:
 - Role-play: Asking a shop assistant for help.
 - Listening practice: Understanding simple dialogues in stores.

Unit 3: Prices and Payment

- Vocabulary: Numbers, currency (e.g., dollars, euros), payment methods (cash, card, online).
- Grammar: Comparatives (cheaper, more expensive); “How much is/are...?”
- Functions: Discussing prices and payment options.
- Activities:
 - Practice: Reading price tags.
 - Role-play: Asking about and negotiating prices.

Unit 4: Describing Products

- Vocabulary: Product features (size, color, weight), brand names, adjectives (new, old, light, heavy).
- Grammar: Adjectives and their order; “It is/They are...” structures.
- Functions: Describing and comparing items.

- Activities:
 - Writing practice: Describing favorite products.
 - Speaking practice: Comparing two items in a shop.
- Unit 5: Shopping Online**
- Vocabulary: Website navigation (cart, checkout, shipping), online shopping terms (in stock, out of stock).
- Grammar: Present simple for general statements; imperative verbs (Click, Add, Proceed).
- Functions: Understanding basic online shopping processes.
- Activities:
 - Reading: Understanding product descriptions online.
 - Writing: Filling out an online shopping form.
- Unit 6: Returning or Exchanging Items**
- Vocabulary: Return, refund, exchange, receipt, damaged, faulty.
- Grammar: Past simple for explaining issues (I bought...; It didn't work).
- Functions: Making complaints and requesting exchanges or refunds.
- Activities:
 - Role-play: Returning an item to a store.
 - Listening practice: Customer service interactions.

Implementation and Challenges

The implementation of this syllabus requires collaboration with community centers, NGOs, and local educational institutions. Challenges include:

1. Time constraints faced by housewives.
2. Varied levels of prior education and exposure to English.
3. Limited access to technology in semi-urban and rural areas.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significance of tailored language instruction for underserved groups, focusing on housewives in Kosamba who seek to improve their English skills for personal and family goals. It underscores the need for ESP curricula that address their unique needs, preferences, and challenges, contributing to individual empowerment and community development. The research reveals the complex interplay of linguistic, social, and personal factors influencing adult language learning and advocates for a holistic approach that considers learners' motivations and sociocultural contexts. As English remains vital in education, commerce, and global communication in India, the study emphasizes the importance of creating effective language learning opportunities for all societal segments. The development of an ESP syllabus for housewives in Kosamba serves as a model for similar initiatives targeting other underrepresented groups, offering a meaningful impact on learners' lives and advancing the fields of ESP and adult language education.

Designing an ESP syllabus for housewives is a step toward empowering this demographic with functional English skills for everyday and aspirational needs. The proposed syllabus addresses practical language use, fostering confidence and self-reliance. Future research can focus on evaluating the effectiveness of such syllabi through pilot programs and exploring the use of technology to enhance learning outcomes.

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