

## An ESP Pre-Service Extensive Writing Course for the Young Pakistanis Opting For Banking as a Future Profession

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### **Abstract**

*The present study emphasizes on designing of an ESP Pre-service Extensive Writing Course for the Young Pakistanis opting for banking as a future profession. Hence, to propose the course, needs analysis is done. Needs analysis includes survey with the help of questionnaire, and the written test i.e. an IELTS test to check the written proficiency of the participants so that they may meet the standards of their future workplace. The responses collected through the survey show that the participants lack enough proficiency in English Language to draft an effective document in the banking context where they will have to record and confirm various operations. They need to improve their writing skill in the context of their future workplace so to achieve maximum proficiency in producing any written document. Keeping in view the needs of the young Pakistanis opting for banking as their future career, an ESP Pre-service Extensive Writing Course is proposed in this study.*

**Key Words:** ESP, Communication Skills (CS) Course, IELTS test, Pre-service Extensive Writing course, needs analysis, workplace operations

### **1. Introduction**

“Even when we transact business by phone, we like to ‘have something in writing’.” (Seely, 2005:10) This very statement motivated me to design a writing course for the profession that deals with most sensitive issues like accounting, finance, credits, debits, transactions and so on. And that is the profession of banking. The nature of the job in banks demands precision and height of accuracy to document any operation. Thus, single error in the recording of facts and figures may lead to serious consequences. Moreover, the promotions and bonuses mostly rely on how vigilant is the officer to accurately record and document the financial and accounting operations along with their details.

Unfortunately, the young Pakistanis finishing their sixteen years of education cannot do as well as it is demanded by their job situation. Students, even after attempting for functional English courses offered by the departments in various programs, cannot satisfy the needs of their future workplace. There is no contextualization of the knowledge they gain in such courses. They learn the four skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. But they do not learn how to use that knowledge in the context of their future careers. If such youngsters opt for banking profession, they face a lot of problems and even serious consequences in their professional setting. Therefore, this situation raises following questions to be answered:

1. What workplace writing needs are to be fulfilled by the bank officers?
2. Why do the students (opting for banking as their future career) lack proficiency in written correspondence?
3. How can they achieve maximum proficiency?
4. Do they need a special course like ESP pre-service extensive writing course?

The objectives of the present research study are to:

1. Identify the target situation needs of the participants.

2. Know deficiency level of participants in producing an effective document.
3. Propose an ESP pre-service extensive writing course for them.

The recent studies conducted in this field show the widespread demand of the ESP courses and highlight the value it is gaining in today's world of business. Bracaj (2014) has discussed ESP in relation to teacher training. The researcher has also presented comparison between the general English teachers and the ESP practitioners (as suggested by Dudley-Evans & St. John). The emphasis is laid upon the training of ESP teachers to be effective ESP practitioners to meet the needs of the learners.

Chen (2013) has presented a case study to research the factors that contribute to successful international medical programs in China. The researcher has found both strengths and needs of a specific international medical program in college of Medicine at Shikezi University. Januleviciene and Kavaliauskiene (2011) have tried to find out students' attitude towards academic public speaking in English and the causes which lead to poor performance. Thus learners' views related to preparation and delivery of presentations are examined. Furthermore, the strengths and weaknesses of students from different cultural backgrounds are explored. Hence, the study has revealed learners' attitudes towards speaking in front of the audience and the perceptions of individual difficulties in preparation and delivery stages.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The framework on the basis of which this course is designed is mainly taken from the work of Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998). The designing of an ESP course involves at first stage the needs analysis. To do the needs analysis, the Today's Concept of Needs Analysis suggested by Dudley Evans and St. John (1998:125) is used as a basis to set questionnaire as it includes aspects of all approaches. It encompasses the following steps:

- A. Professional information about the learner: the tasks and activities learners are/will be using English for – target situation analysis and objective needs
- B. Personal information about the learners: factors which may affect the way they learn such as previous learning experiences, cultural information, reasons for attending the course and expectations of it, attitude to English – wants, means, subjective needs
- C. English language information about the learners: what their current skills and language use are – present situation analysis – which allows us to access (D)
- D. The learners' lacks: the gap between ( C) and (A) – lacks
- E. Language learning information: effective ways of learning the skills and language in (D) – learning needs
- F. Professional communication information about (A): knowledge of how language and skills are used in the target situation – linguistic analysis, discourse analysis, genre analysis
- G. What is wanted from the course
- H. Information about the environment in which the course will be run – means analysis (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998: 12 (as shown in figure 1).

While designing an ESP course, some key variables as suggested by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 157) are to be taken into considerations which are shown in table 1.

General idea of ESP teaching is wrong. It is believed generally that it does not include teaching of grammar. Though the fact is that weaknesses at grammar weaken the expression both oral and written. Thus according to Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998:74-87), two major language issues i.e. grammar in ESP and vocabulary in ESP are to be included in an ESP course. They have further proposed some key grammatical forms to be taught in an ESP business course which are verbs and tense, voice, modals, articles, nominalization, and the logical connectors. Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998: 80-82) have focused on two kinds of vocabulary in an ESP Course which are semi-technical vocabulary and core business vocabulary. Semi-technical vocabulary is associated with the vocabulary of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Core business vocabulary is taught in English for Business Purposes (EBP).

It has been a topic of discussion among the researchers 'What constitutes the writing skill?' When we teach writing skill, there automatically we teach other skills as well. According to Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998: p.115), 'developing writing skill also includes other skills, notably the skills of planning, drafting and revising so that the end product is appropriate'. The writer before starting to write maps the outline and defines the reader. In defining the reader, the writer has to consider the reader's level of knowledge, age, creeds, etc. in order to fulfill his/her expectations.

Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998:p.118) have presented the preferred approach to the teaching of writing which is the synthesis of all the three approaches i.e. the process, the product and the social-constructionist approaches. Thus the preferred approach follows the following stages:

1. Develop rhetorical awareness by looking at model texts;
2. Practice specific genre features, especially moves and writer stance;
3. Carry out writing tasks showing awareness of the needs of individual readers and the discourse community and the purpose of the writing;
4. Evaluate the writing (through peer review or reformulation). (p.118)

In different business contexts, professionals write various forms of writing either to inform or inquire, agree or disagree, notify or suggest etc. All these writings are always purposeful. These professionals require maximum of accuracy and proficiency in their writings so that the message is conveyed with as much clarity of the topic as possible. Some of the advanced ways of written communication are e-mail, letter, and report. An overview of these forms of writing is given below.

The most frequently used form of writing by business professionals is Email. This form has modernized both business and personal communication (Seely, 2005:20). It is quick and inexpensive. Hence, it saves time and money of the sender. 'It is both internal and external. Therefore, multiple readers can read it. Thus, due to diverse audiences, there is wide range of tones used in Emails' (Gerson and Gerson, 2007:132). Due to such advantages, this form is used frequently by the professionals in their business settings.

Writing business letters is, though, a traditional way adopted by professionals to communicate among each other but it is considered the best way to send messages across and keep the record as a solid proof. Many studies are done in business letter writing. Over the past few years, the letter format has changed but still it has remained highly formal and structured. Still, many professionals prefer to send letters because of their importance and permanence. As put forward by Seely (2005:10), employers often lay great stress on the letters written by those applying for jobs – even to the extent of sometimes demanding that these be handwritten rather than word-processed."

Writing report is again frequent among the professionals at work. Maximum of the authentic information is transferred to others through reports. They are also highly structured and formal like letters. Many reports involve research in order to give authentic information and certain facts and figures. Report is also a very useful form of writing through which many purposes are fulfilled by business professionals. According to Gerson and Gerson (2007: p. 483), reports satisfy one or all of the needs like to supply a record of work accomplished, to record and clarify complex information for future reference, to present information to a large number of people, to record problems encountered and procedures, to document schedule and current status, timetables and milestones; and finally to recommend future actions.

### **3. Methodology**

Needs analysis was done with the help of questionnaire based on the framework presented by Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998: 125). Mostly, the Likert Scale was used to set questionnaire. It was also modified where needed. Questionnaire was administered in two steps i.e. target situation analysis and workplace writing needs from 25 bank officers of grade 1 & 2 (both male and female) selected randomly from five different banks (Habib Bank Limited, Bank Al Habib Limited, Allied Bank Limited, NIB and United Bank Limited) of Bahawalpur City, and the rest was administered from 80 postgraduate students (both male and female with the interest to opt banking as their future career) selected randomly from the Department of Commerce, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan. Besides, an IELTS written test was piloted to check the proficiency level of the selected sample of students.

The data collected through questionnaire was analysed statistically in three different parts showing the percentile. The IELTS written test was graded according to the band scale devised by British Council to mark accuracy and proficiency level. The results were shown with the help of a graph. Finally the findings of analysed data were discussed to propose an ESP Extensive Writing Course. The course was designed according to the guidelines suggested by Dudley-Evans and St. John (see theoretical framework). The proposed course was designed while keeping the needs of the participants and their future workplace in view.

This study is unique of its kind as such course is not proposed elsewhere in Pakistan especially for the context of banking. The significance of this course lies in its specification to enhance only the writing skill to ensure and confirm accuracy of facts and figures to the maximum related to any operations at workplace.

#### **4. Analysis of the Collected Data**

The collected data through questionnaires is analysed stepwise as under:

##### **4.1. Percentile of Needs Analysis done with the help of Questionnaire**

###### **4.1.1. Target Situation Analysis: Professional Needs of Bankers**

The investigation presented in terms of percentile through graphical demonstration (see table 2) shows that bankers are inept to write an operational document as they lack effective writing technicalities. Accordingly, they suffer from anxiety and feel great embarrassment when they have to do written correspondence. They believe that their present proficiency is not adequate to fulfill the requirements of their professional setting. They wish to have correspondence at both national and international level. Therefore, they feel their proficiency in using English language for written correspondence lacks.

###### **4.1.1.1. Writing Needs of Bankers**

According to the responses (as shown in table 3) given by bank officers, most frequent written correspondence is done through e-mails. The second most frequent is letter and memo writing. Reports are also written but they are less frequent. Hence the writing course may focus on these three modes of writing. The writing course may include the sessions related to e-mails, letters and memos, and finally reports.

###### **4.1.2. Present Situation Analysis: Personal Needs of Students**

Present situation analysis (see table 4) displays that the students are not so competent at producing various forms of document. They have shown their dissatisfaction with the 'CS' course in preparing them for their future workplace. They cannot even comprehend various text types which may lead to imperfect writing. Thus they wish to have an ESP writing course.

###### **4.1.3. Learning Needs of Students and the Writing Course**

As revealed in tables 5 &6, typically, students wish to learn through reading texts and taking notes. They also like to learn by memorizing material. They add that the use of whiteboard is effective for them as they can take notes from it which gets beneficial for them. The students like to be evaluated through written tests, quizzes and surprise tests set by the teachers. They also want to assess their own learning by seeing if they can use what they have learnt in real life situations.

Hence, the students are not satisfied with the quality of their writing. They wish to join an ESP Pre-service Extensive Writing Course. They want to focus on certain writing technicalities to get capable of writing professional documents. Thus the<sup>6</sup>th graph (see Appendix B) shows the language areas to improve writing skill which are to be focused in the course.

#### **4.2. IELTS Test Results of Bankers: Graphic presentation of the bands obtained in the test**

According to IELTS test results, only 10% students have scored band 7, 10% scored 6 and other 20% students scored band 5. Moreover, 20% scored 4, 30% scored 3 and 10% scored band 2. Nobody has got any of the bands 8, 9, 1, 0. Thus, the band score displays that majority of the students are less proficient in drafting the document. They are unable to put their thoughts in words properly. They need to join a pre-service course to improve their writing skill.

### **5. Discussion**

The analysis of the data shows that students are inefficient to write an effective document as they lack effective writing skill. They believe that their present proficiency is not enough to fulfill the requirements of their future professional setting. Even if they are given any text like business letters or reports to comprehend, they would not be able to do so as accurately as demanded by their future profession. They believe that they can improve their writing skill if they are admitted to a separate course. Therefore, they like to join an ESP Pre-service Extensive Writing Course. They want to focus on certain language areas to improve writing skill so to get dexterous at professional writing.

Mostly, the students prefer to learn through reading texts and taking notes. They like to learn by memorizing material. They add that the use of whiteboard is effective for them as they can take notes from it which gets beneficial for them. The students like to be evaluated through written tests, quizzes and surprise tests set by the teachers. They also want to assess their own learning by seeing if they can use what they have learnt in real life situations.

The results of IELTS Test show that mostly the students are not the competent users of English language. Thus, it is recommended that they need to be offered a separate course to improve their writing skill which would benefit them at their professional setting (see figure 2).

## **6. Proposed ESP Pre-service Intensive Writing Course for Bankers**

After needs analysis and discussion, it is the time to recommend and propose an ESP Writing Course. The Pre-service Extensive Writing Course is designed to fulfill needs of the future workplace.

The aims of the proposed course are to enable the learners:

- a. enhance their vocabulary and its usage
- b. construct right grammatical and coherent sentences
- c. improve tenses and spellings
- d. arrange ideas and paragraphs
- e. link sentences together
- f. summarize ideas
- g. express opinions, cause and effect, and comparison and contrast
- h. punctuate the document
- i. use layouts
- j. format text effectively
- k. write any form of writing especially E-mails, letters, and reports

The key variables for the proposed course are

Variables	Considered Factors
Course duration	Extensive (as students can carry on with the course while having other obligations like studies/part time job etc. and it can be changed to intensive duration according to the need and interest of students)
Participants	Students (opting for Banking as a future profession)
Group size	Medium group (can be changed according to the feasibility and availability of resources)
Location	Non-residential
Mode of learning	Class-teaching
Trainers	ESP Practitioners

The course will be of 8 weeks. It will be an extensive course of about 12 credit hours a week. Therefore, the course will be of 96 credit hours. The sessions will be held four days a week which are Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Each session will be of 3 hours. The proposed timing for course will be 10:00pm to 01:00pm (the schedule of the course can be changed according to the feasibility of students as well as the ESP practitioners).

This course is designed for 'pre-experience learners' (Ellis and Johnson, 1997: p.15). These learners will be the students of B. Com. & M. Com. (who will be interested in career of Banking) of either the universities or colleges. Though these learners will not have language experience of their future profession i.e. banking but they will be prepared to perform efficiently at their workplace in future. Thus, the course is designed according to the needs of students. As ESP teaching is extremely different therefore the term 'teacher' must be replaced by 'practitioner' (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998: p. 13). They have suggested some roles of an ESP practitioner which are to be a teacher, a course designer and materials provider, collaborator, researcher and evaluator. Thus, the teacher will be an ESP practitioner who will play all these roles. According to the level of the students, learner-centered approach will be appropriate. It will lead to the usage of Eclectic approach of teaching where the ESP practitioner will be able to switch in between different methods to teach how to write professionally in a business setting.

In order to prepare the learners effective writers, the course includes teaching of certain technicalities and the writing process. Mainly, the preference is given to E-mails, Business letters and Memos, and Reports to be taught in the course. It is only because the learners' target situation demands so. The proposed course also highlights the study of some grammatical forms due to learners' low level of English grammatical concepts. The learners will be provided with handouts in the form of photo copies and slides. Work sheets will be used to have certain practice by assigning writing tasks.

There will be 32 sessions in 8 weeks. Each session will be of 3 hours. Content break-down in sessions is given in the following table:

WEEK	SESSION	TOPIC
1 <sup>st</sup>	1	Parts of Speech (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	2	Nominalization (Use of Affixes)
	3	Comparison: Degree (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	4	Modal Auxiliary Verbs (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
2 <sup>nd</sup>	5	Phrasal Verbs I (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	6	Phrasal Verbs (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	7	Tenses: Present, Past (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	8	Tenses: Past, Future (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
3 <sup>rd</sup>	9	Passives (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	10	Test (Comparison: Degree, Modal Auxiliary Verbs, Phrasal Verbs, Tenses, Passives)
	11	Structures after Verbs, Adjectives and Nouns (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	12	Basic Sentence Structures (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
4 <sup>th</sup>	13	Sentence Types (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	14	Logical Connectors (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	15	Indirect Speech (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	16	Use of Articles (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
5 <sup>th</sup>	17	Punctuation (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	18	Test (Structures after Verbs, Adjectives, and Nouns; Basic Sentence Structures, Sentence Types, Logical Connectors, Indirect Speech, Use of Articles, Punctuation)
	19	Defining the Audience & Planning a Document (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	20	The Writing Process
6 <sup>th</sup>	21	Paragraphing and Formatting Text (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	22	Drafting and Finishing (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	23	Revising and Editing (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	24	Preparing a Style Sheet (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
7 <sup>th</sup>	25	Summarization & Use of Abbreviations (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	26	E-mails (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	27	Formatting E-mails & Use of Layout (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	28	Business Letters and Memos: Letter Format & Use of Layout (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
8 <sup>th</sup>	29	Types of Business Letters (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	30	Report Writing: Report Format & Use of Layout (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	31	Types of Reports (Activity/ Practice through Exercises)
	32	Test (Summarization & Use of Abbreviations, E-mails, Business Letters and Types, Report Writing and Types)

The recommended books and related material is given below:

- Gerson, J. and Gerson, M. (2007). Technical Writing. Pearson Education, Inc. Dorling Kindersley Publishing, Inc.
- Riordan, G. and Pauley, E (2004). Technical Report Writing Today. Ed. 8. Bizantra Dreamtech Press.
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- Seely, John (2007). Effective Writing. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## 7. Conclusion

To conclude, Bankers mostly need to write reports, letters and E-mails frequently, quarterly, half-annually and annually respectively. So bankers require maximum accuracy in their information as a little mistake of language can change the whole statement or record. They have to stay clear in their points, coherent in their ideas, precise and authentic in their language usage. Thus, students need to improve their writing skill as they deal with such sensitive issues like finance and accounting. The keeping of financial records needs accuracy and authenticity which comes with effective writingskill which is possible only when an ESP Pre-service Extensive Writing Course is offered. They have shown great interest and enthusiasm for this course.

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## Appendix A:

### Needs Analysis

#### i. Target Situation Analysis: Professional Needs Of Bankers

Statements	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
Business vocabulary is sufficient to be used but sentence construction is problem.					
Right usage of tense seems a problem.					
Lacking good written skill adds to my anxiety.					
I feel great embarrassment whenever I have to write a letter, email or any report.					
My present proficiency in English Language is sufficient to communicate at my target situation easily.					
I want to learn English Language to improve workplace proficiency to have effective correspondence, improve grade, and have a correspondence with Foreign Currency Branch etc.					
I will need to use English nationally, internationally and locally.					
English is required the most when dealing with local customers, giving instructions, sharing problems and suggesting solutions, exchanging ideas and opinions with co-officers.					
The environment where English will be used is both formal and informal.					

**ii. The Writing Needs (Bankers)**

What do you need most in your work?				
Options	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Report Writing				
Filling out Forms				
Letter Writing				
Sending E-mails				
How do you want your language level in the following activities?				
Options	Very Good	Adequate	Inadequate	Poor
Note Taking				
Summary Writing				
Memo Taking				
Report Writing				
Filling of Forms				
Letter Writing				
Sending E-mails				
Are you satisfied with the quality of your Writing?	Yes:		No:	
Do you think short in-service ESP Writing Course can improve your writing?	Yes:		No:	

**iii. Present Situation Analysis: Personal Needs Of Students**

Statements	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
I can write any form of writing effectively in business setting.					
I am satisfied with the quality of my writing.					
I can understand a variety of texts, such as business reports, documents newspaper articles.					
I can write business related letters, e-mails, reports, memos etc.					
I have good command on writing in English and its grammar rules.					
I can better improve my writing skill if I am admitted to a special course.					
I need an ESP Writing Course in order to improve my writing skill.					

**iv. Learning Needs Of Students**

Statements	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
I like learning by memorizing material.					
I like learning either by listening to audio tapes or watching videos/ through pictures and taking notes.					
I like learning by reading through texts and taking notes.					
I like learning by copying from the board.					
I like learning with the help of certain written activities.					
I like to be evaluated/ assessed by the written tests set by the teacher.					
I like to be evaluated/ assessed by seeing if I can use language I have learnt in real life situations.					
I like to join course to improve my written skills.					

#### v. The Writing Needs Of Students

Which of the following writing skills do you most need to focus on?		
Options	Yes	No
How to link sentences together?		
How to summarize ideas?		
How to make order?		
How to organize ideas and paragraphs?		
How to express opinion?		
How to compare and contrast?		
How to express cause and effect?		
How to punctuate?		
How to layout?		
Others: tenses, spellings, right usage of vocabulary etc.		

#### IELTS TEST:

**You should spend about 20 min on this task.**

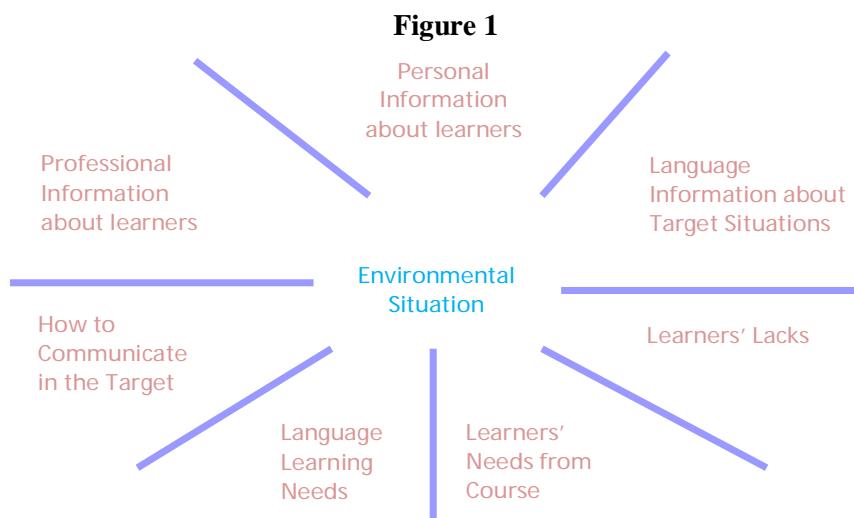
“You have had a bank account for a few years. Recently you received a letter from the bank stating that your account is \$240 overdrawn and that you will be charged \$70 which will be taken directly from your account. You know that this information is incorrect.”

Write a letter to the bank. Explain what has happened and say what you would like them to do about it.

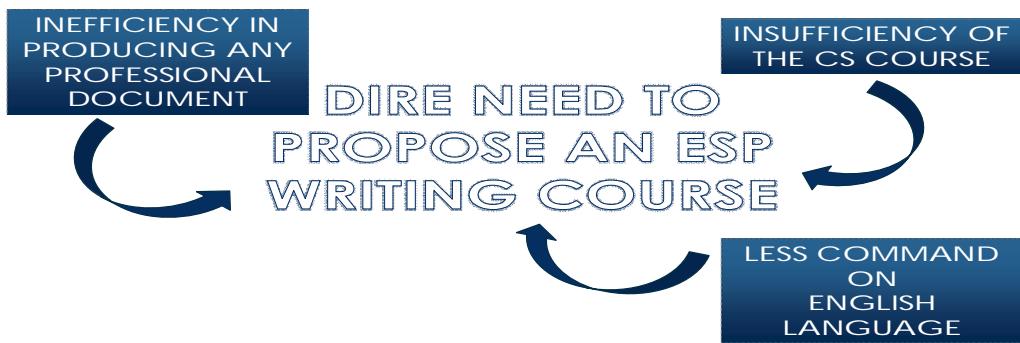
**You should write at least 150 words.**

**You do not need to write your own address.**

#### Appendix B



**Figure 1: What needs analysis establishes (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998: 125)**

**Figure 2****Figure 2: Dire need to propose an ESP Writing Course****Table 1**

Variables	Factors to be considered
<b>Course duration</b>	Is it intensive or extensive?
<b>Participants</b>	Are they all from the same company or is it an open registration course?
<b>Group size</b>	Is it one-to-one or a small group?
<b>Location</b>	Is it in-house, in country or overseas; residential or non-residential?
<b>Mode of learning</b>	Is it class teaching, telephone teaching, self-study?
<b>Trainers</b>	Are they company employees or outsiders?

**Table 1: Key variables in Business English Courses (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998:57)****Table 2**

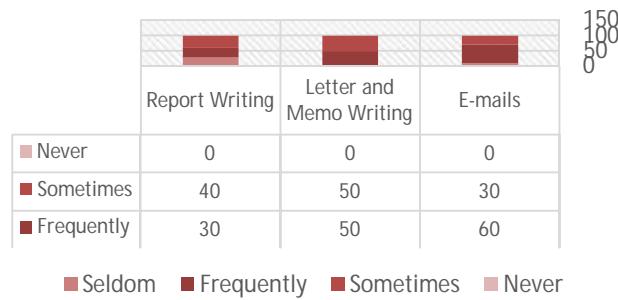
Statements	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
Business vocabulary is sufficient to be used but sentence construction is problem.	28	60	4	4	4
Right usage of tense seems a problem.	8	68	0	16	8
Lacking good writing skill adds to my anxiety.	12	52	4	24	8
I feel great embarrassment whenever I have to write a letter, email or any report.	12	44	8	20	16
My present proficiency in English Language is sufficient to communicate at my target situation easily.	4	36	12	40	8
I want to learn English Language to improve workplace proficiency to have effective correspondence, improve grade, and have a correspondence with Foreign Currency Branch etc.	28	60	0	8	4
I will need to use English nationally, internationally and locally.	20	72	4	4	0
English is required the most when dealing with local customers, giving instructions, sharing problems and suggesting solutions, exchanging ideas and opinions with co-officers.	16	68	8	4	4
The environment where English will be used is both formal and informal.	26	44	30	0	0

**Table 2: Percentile showing Target Situation Analysis: Professional Needs of Bankers**

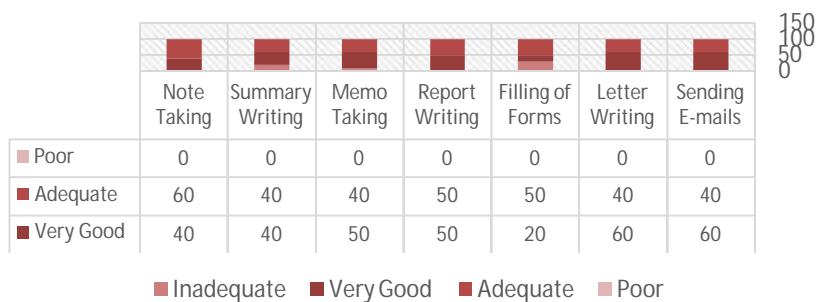
## TARGET SITUATION ANALYSIS: PROFESSIONAL NEEDS OF BANKERS

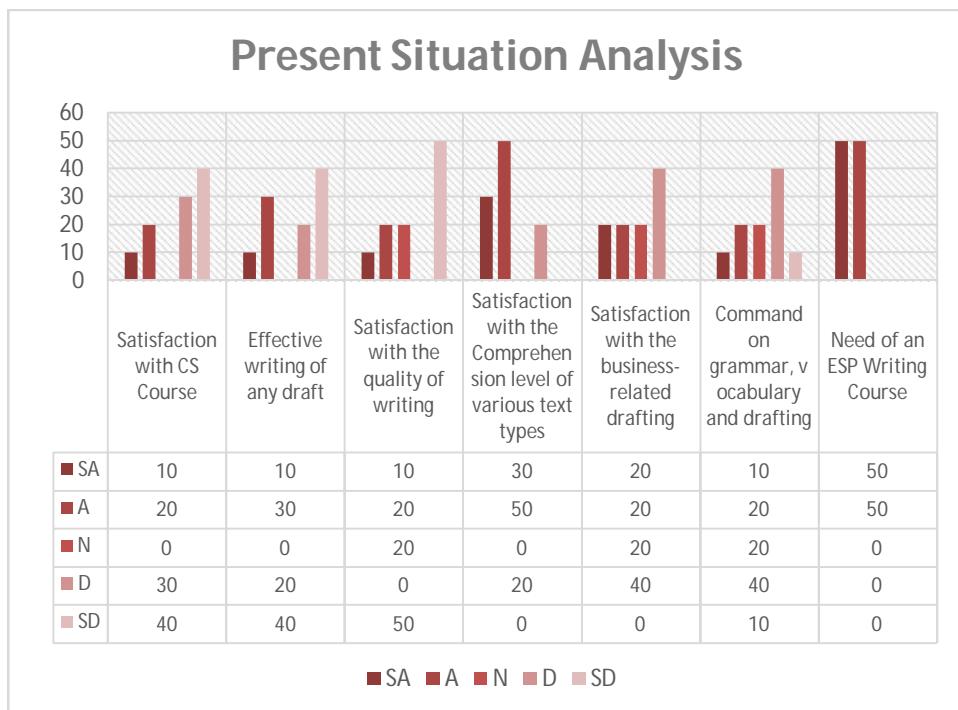
**Table 3**

### The Writing Course: Workplace Writing Requirements

**Table 4**

### The Writing Course: Language Level



**Table 5****Table 6**