

# **Designing ESP Reading Materials for Philosophy**

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*Dra. Josefa J. Mardijono, M.Pd.*

*Petra Christian University*

Jl. Siwalankerto 121-131, Surabaya 60236

Indonesia

josefamardijono449@gmail.com

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper is based the previous action research on ESP for Philosophy, focusing on the reading materials for Philosophy. The materials design, following the learning-centered ESP, is of a wide-angled type of syllabus, considering relevant theories on language learning and material development, and a preliminary study on the language used in Philosophy.

**Key words:** reading materials, Philosophy, scaffolding, comprehensible inputs

## **INTRODUCTION**

Recent development in ESP has resulted ESP learning materials for different fields of study. However, Philosophy is a hardly touched field, whereas there is a demand for assisting the students of Philosophy “to improve their reading skills in comprehending philosophy texts in English” (Mardijono, 2012). This paper is focused on reading materials designed for students of the Philosophy Department, furthering the “previous explorative classroom research” (Mardijono, 2012).

## **MATERIALS DESIGN**

The materials were designed in line with Basturken’s wide-angel of material design (Bastukmen, 2006, pp. 25-26), considering the “learning needs” besides the “target needs” revealed through the “need analysis” (Mardijono, 2012), the learning theory, and some principles relevant to material development to “achieve impact” (Tomlinson, B. 2007, pp 7-22). They comprise (1) inspiring materials to build their positive perception and confidence, enhancing their motivation, (2) scaffolding materials to bridge the learning needs and the target needs, (3) target materials, and (4) materials to promote autonomous learning. Furthermore, the materials selected are relatively comprehensible, sequenced from simpler to more complex in terms of sentence patterns, “lexical density” as well as the level of “nominalizations” (Paltridge, 2008, pp 14-15) as revealed through the preliminary study of the language use.

### **(1) Inspiring Materials**

To build the students' positive perception about themselves and others, inspiring songs and poems are employed, which also bring variation to the materials and the learning activities. This kind of materials is believed to be able to arouse the students' interest and attend to the students' affective side, which has "influence" on their learning process (Williams and Burden, 2007, pp. 127-129, Brown, 2001, p.61-63).

### **(2) Scaffolding Materials**

The scaffolding materials consist of materials to build the students' "reading power" (Mikulecky & Jeffries, 2007, pp 1-200), materials facilitating reading philosophy texts, such as tips or guidelines for studying and reading Philosophy, downloaded from some online sites. The materials are adopted and complemented by some leading and comprehension questions.

To adjust to the students' reading level, the texts are selected from Philosophy textbooks of simpler structural patterns with more comprehensible topics, such as Ethics: Contemporary Readings (Gensler, Spurgin, and Swindal, 2005). The texts are adopted considering the length reasonable to be covered in one meeting and are provided with some exercises on structural patterns, vocabulary, referents, focusing on different comprehension questions. These supporting materials are supposed to gradually develop their reading ability from comprehending easier to more difficult materials and gearing them to understand the target materials.

### **(3) The Target Materials**

The target materials are of higher complexity and level of difficulty in terms of structure, vocabulary, and topics to comprehend, such as the texts from "Western Philosophy" on *the innate knowledge* and Plato's Philosophical dialogue, *Innate Knowledge: Plato, Meno* (Cottingham, ed., 1997, pp 2-22). The complexity of the material is facilitated by some leading questions when it is introduced to the students for the first time, complemented by explanation of some key words, and role playing to make it fun and interesting to read. Another way to prepare the students to read the target reading texts is preceded by a film show. The "vivid pictorial images" presented in the film can "illustrate, illuminate, and provoke philosophical thinking" (Falzon, 2002, p. 5), contributing some schemata (Nuttall, 2005, p. 7) to be activated when they comprehend the related text.

### **(4) Materials to Promote Autonomous Learning**

In addition to the class materials, the course is provided with lists of vocabulary to expand the students' vocabulary (Mikulecky and Jeffries, pp 303-309). Some materials for extensive reading are also supplemented as reading for enjoyment. These outside class materials are expected to promote autonomous learning to be carried over after the completion of the course

## CONCLUSION

To meet the “learning needs” and “target needs”, the materials for ESP reading for Philosophy are selected from different sources attending both to the cognitive and the affective sides of the students, while considering the comprehensibility, and variation to arouse interest. In addition, some vocabulary enrichment and extensive reading materials are given to enhance their intrinsic motivation to keep learning and improving their skills in reading English Philosophy texts.

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## BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Josefa J. Mardijono is currently a senior lecturer in the English Department – Faculty of Letters, Petra Christian University. She has taught various courses, such as English Skills Courses, Language Course Design, Methods in Linguistics Research and Seminar in Linguistics. Her research interest is in classroom action research and classroom discourse.