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Designing an English for Specific Purposes Course for Lähte Gymnasium Technology Module Students

MA thesis

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to understand the requirements for creating an effective English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course and to design such a language course for the 11th grade Technology module students in Lähte Gymnasium. The first chapter describes the aspects of ESP, such as the concept itself, the teacher's role, needs analysis, teaching, and assessing, and looks into aspects of course and syllabus design. The third chapter unites the theoretical knowledge into a practical needs analysis, course outline, and discussion of the intended ESP course.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, course design, syllabus

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INTRODUCTION

English has become the dominant language in various professional and academic fields, necessitating proficiency in specialised linguistic skills to meet the demands of global communication. Additionally, English language instruction in upper secondary education should not be limited to general proficiency but should also equip students with the ability to engage with subject-specific content in their prospective academic and professional futures. This can be supported via English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which is a needs-based approach to language learning that focuses on developing the linguistic and communicative skills required in real-life professional and academic contexts. Unlike English for General Purposes (EGP), ESP is tailored to learners' academic or career goals, with course specificity depending on the homogeneity of the learner group – ranging from wide-angled to narrow-angled designs (Basturkmen 2010).

While ESP courses are commonly found in vocational schools and higher education, their inclusion in upper secondary education remains relatively underexplored. However, integrating ESP at this level offers clear benefits: it equips students with relevant skills earlier, enhances engagement by linking language to real-world contexts, and adds variety to the curriculum. This is particularly motivating for students because the content feels relevant to their lives and goals (Viana et al. 2019).

This thesis aims to design an ESP course for 11th-grade students in the Technology module at Lähte Gymnasium that supports the development of subject-specific language skills, aligns with the school's curriculum, and addresses the diverse needs and proficiency levels of learners through differentiated, task-based instruction. The course seeks to bridge content from technical subjects with practical English use, thereby increasing learner motivation, academic readiness, and long-term language competence.

The proposed course is designed for students in the Technology module, many of whom are likely to pursue studies or careers in technical fields. It aims to strengthen students' ability to understand and use technical English, reinforcing content previously learnt in subject-area courses while building skills in reading, writing, and speaking for academic and professional purposes. An ESP course tailored to the specific school curriculum can provide a more targeted approach to language learning, and addressing these skills in upper secondary school can enhance the students' ability to engage with academic or technical texts, participate in field-related discussions, and develop career-specific communication skills, which can in turn facilitate a smoother transition to higher education or vocational training, where specialised English skills are increasingly required. Specialised language learning in areas already familiar to the learner group can additionally reinforce and expand upon the knowledge students have acquired in their subject-area lessons.

The school curriculum in Lähte Gymnasium is structured around four study modules – Media, Sports, Natural Sciences, and Technology – each designed to provide students with subject-specific knowledge that now require the integration of relevant language instruction. The Technology module includes core courses such as intelligent computer use, technical drawing, practical physics, geoinformatics, energetics, driving, and 3D modelling. The electives include robotics, Python programming, smithing, and 3D technology. The proposed ESP course complements this curriculum by focusing on language tasks linked to these subjects, allowing students to build on their existing knowledge while developing specialised communication skills. To achieve this, instruction will be based on potentially relevant CEFR skills in the B1 and B2 range, providing technical vocabulary practice and using previously learnt subjects as the carrier content.

To develop an effective ESP course, it is crucial to first establish a solid theoretical foundation in both ESP teaching and course design because English language learning in

schools usually happens in the form of EGP. Understanding ESP as an approach to language teaching is imperative to creating a proper framework for what and how should be taught within the course. The literature review will thus explore key aspects of ESP, including its types, characteristics, requirements for needs analysis, and best practices in course design. Additionally, the study will examine the role of the teacher in ESP instruction, methodologies for effective teaching and assessment, and strategies for evaluating the success of the course itself.

The thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 1 provides a theoretical foundation by examining the concept of ESP, its various types, and its defining characteristics. It explores the distinctions between ESP and EGP, highlighting the role of needs analysis in shaping ESP instruction. Additionally, this chapter outlines the key considerations for designing, delivering, and evaluating an ESP course, including pedagogical approaches, teacher roles, assessment strategies, and quality assurance measures, as well as the principles of course design and materials development that inform ESP syllabus construction. Chapter 2 presents the empirical foundation for the course development, beginning with an analysis of the situation of students in the Technology module. This and the following needs analysis serve as the basis for the proposed ESP course, which is designed to develop language skills while reinforcing subject-area knowledge through targeted language instruction. The chapter details the course's learning outcomes, syllabus structure, instructional strategies, and assessment methods, demonstrating how the course aligns with both the school curriculum and broader ESP principles. The chapter will also provide a discussion and analysis of potential lesson activities. In addition, there will be an analysis of potential challenges and shortcomings of the proposed course and their possible solutions.

1. ESP LANGUAGE LEARNING AND COURSE DESIGN

1.1 ESP and its types

English language learning in schools is predominantly structured around English for General Purposes (EGP), a broad pedagogical approach aimed at fostering overall language proficiency and not a specific field. However, because there is an increasing demand for language skills that are tailored to specific professional or academic fields, it is common to offer additional elective courses, for example in Business English, using the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach to help students explore potential academic or career paths.

ESP represents a needs-based, targeted approach to language instruction that meets the specific linguistic and communicative demands of particular disciplines or occupations. To understand the specialised approach of ESP better, this literature review aims to explore and explain the core, characteristics, types, differences with EGP, the teacher's role, basis for needs analysis, teaching, and assessment as the significant aspects that should be considered in order to create an effective ESP course.

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), who call ESP both a language-centred and a learning-centred approach to teaching, the main component of ESP is emphasis on learner needs, which then determine content selection and instructional methodology. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) expand upon it, highlighting the practical orientation of ESP and its emphasis on fulfilling learners' educational or professional objectives. For upper secondary school learners, however, these goals may still be unclear or developing. This means that ESP teachers must help students explore potential future pathways and guide them in identifying the types of language they might need in academic or workplace settings.

Another defining feature of ESP is its flexibility and interdisciplinary nature, which allows it to adapt to the communicative demands of diverse professional or academic contexts (Anthony, 2018). Basturkmen (2010) similarly stresses that ESP should help learners complete real-life tasks in their target contexts. For upper secondary students, this may involve more structured and scaffolded tasks that simulate workplace or academic situations related to the appropriate registers, genres, and vocabulary. Anthony (2018) and Woodrow (2018) provide similar definitions, maintaining that ESP centres on students' needs, thus also requiring a thorough needs analysis. This means that ESP is a needs-based language teaching methodology that centres on the essential language, styles, and proficiencies to address professional or academic objectives to support skills required to complete contextual real-life tasks. As such, ESP is also interdisciplinary and focused more on practical application than adhering to theoretical approaches (Hyland 2022).

Linguistically, ESP focuses on specialised vocabulary and places comparatively less weight on explicit grammar instruction, assuming learners possess foundational grammatical competence (Woodrow 2018). In combining multiple approaches to developing language skills, ESP integrates principles from Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and Project-Based Learning (Anthony 2018). ESP also shares conceptual parallels with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), particularly in its engagement with subject-specific content. Yang (2016) states the ultimate goal of both approaches is to increase employability and chances of academic achievement. Although both ESP and CLIL aim to enhance academic and professional outcomes (Yang, 2016), CLIL integrates content and language instruction concurrently, which can be challenging for less proficient learners. ESP, by contrast, presumes some subject familiarity and focuses on refining language skills, such as discipline-specific vocabulary, formal writing conventions, and

comprehension of technical texts (Woodrow 2018). However, the minimal focus on grammar can still disadvantage lower-level students.

An additional core characteristic of ESP is that in cases of more specific ESP courses, it is common for teachers to lack specialised subject knowledge (Viana et al. 2019), although such expertise is not considered essential (Hutchinson and Waters 1987). In many cases, students can possess greater subject-matter knowledge than their teachers (Woodrow 2018). As such, an ESP course is a collaborative effort with teachers and students jointly setting meaningful and attainable goals (Anthony 2018, Viana et al 2019). In addition to being a collaboration between teachers and learners, ESP teachers should gather insights from target area specialists, to obtain insights into the specific linguistic features, genre conventions, and communicative skills that are necessary for effective engagement within the target professional or academic setting (Anthony 2018). Through an interdisciplinary and cooperative framework, ESP instruction ensures that learners develop the language competencies needed for successful integration into their respective fields.

The two major categories of ESP are English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), which can divide into multiple subcategories, depending on how specific the purpose is – EAP can be general (English for General Academic Purposes or EGAP) or used in specific fields (English for Specific Academic Purposes or ESAP); EOP can be vocational (English for Vocational Purposes or EVP) for specific occupation related language or professional (English for Professional Purposes or EPP) for more general fields, such as law or medicine (Anthony 2018, Basturkmen 2010). In time, the number of types of English has increased following the need for new specificities (Hyland 2022). It is, however, important to note that regardless of the numerous categories, the features can overlap, and no types of ESP are actually mutually exclusive (Brown 2016).

A key challenge lies in determining the appropriate degree of specificity to effectively address the varied and often competing needs of diverse learner groups. If the goal is to teach learners from a range of specialisations, materials for general academic interest are used (Woodrow 2018). Anthony (2018) explains that selecting a subcategory of ESP to determine course content can be problematic, as courses that are either too specific or too general risk omitting essential topics or vocabulary that learners may require in their target contexts. Viana et al (2019) also says that even in the context of one occupation, it would be very difficult to create an ESP course that fulfils the needs of all professionals in the field. Brown (2016) emphasises the importance of finding a common core that reflects the shared needs of students. He suggests supplementing this core with tasks that allow learners to engage more deeply with their specific specialist subjects. In an upper secondary school context this would mean providing students with the opportunity to choose between texts and topics that interest them.

ESP courses can also be categorised by the time of their occurrence (Woodrow 2018). Pre-sessional courses take place before the language skills are needed, foundation courses are preparatory for other learning situations, and in-sessional ESP courses take place during other studies, possibly making them the most specific courses content-wise. In an upper-secondary context, where student expertise is low, an in-sessional course can be applied to specific subjects in the curriculum.

1.2 ESP vs EGP

While EGP and ESP are presented as separate categories, the distinction between them is not always clear, because they both aim to develop the learners' communicative competences (Basturkmen 2010). ESP often uses similar methods to EGP in the classroom as the underlying processes of acquiring vocabulary and pronunciation remain the same (Anthony 2018).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) similarly note that the approaches are similar in theory but point out awareness of specific target needs as a significant difference.

The primary difference between EGP and ESP lies in their respective content. While EGP draws on a multitude of topics and genres, ESP centres on texts typical for a specific field (Woodrow 2018). Basturkmen (2010) distinguishes between the likely goals between the two approaches – while EGP aims to cultivate linguistic proficiency alongside critical thinking and social skills, ESP is primarily driven by external motivations and the linguistic demands of professional or academic target contexts. In an upper secondary school context, the same external motivators are likely to be absent, which can mean that it is necessary for the teacher to explain the difference in learning outcomes and motivate the students.

Woodrow (2018) outlines a number of differences between EGP and ESP in terms of learner profiles and course content. ESP learners are usually adults with some prior English knowledge and externally motivated to achieve a common goal. EGP learners can be of all ages, on various levels, with different goals and motivations. ESP courses are usually short term, more focused and have specific content while EGP courses are long term and have general content. ESP courses are usually limited to specific time periods because the specific skills are acquired, and the needs of the students change (Basturkmen 2010). Woodrow (2018) also highlights the difference in learning grammar – ESP usually has limited emphasis on it, but EGP values the whole grammatical system as one of the central aspects of language learning.

The relationship between teachers and learners may differ in EGP and ESP classrooms due to the nature of the language being taught. In an EGP classroom the teacher is viewed as the expert because the choice of content and vocabulary taught in the classroom relies on the strengths and existing knowledge of the teachers (Coxhead 2018). The ESP teacher might lack subject-specific knowledge, which may lead to teachers feeling insecure about their expertise.

Students may be affected or even disappointed if they also perceive their teacher as less than competent (Woodrow 2018).

Viana et al (2019) add predetermination of content in an educational context to the list of differences: EGP can be used to develop language skills based on previously set conditions, such as national curriculums because they are aimed to develop general proficiency; ESP courses, however, do not exist without context as they are always a response to specific factors that dictate a need for it. However, this does not exclude ESP from being placed into the same educational contexts.

1.3 Teacher's role in ESP

The general agreement in the literature is that teachers of ESP courses have numerous responsibilities beyond delivering classroom instruction. The foremost task of an ESP teacher is understanding the purpose of the course and needs of their students, considering that learners usually have more specific expectations than in an EGP classroom (Hutchinson and Waters 1987). Awareness of purpose and needs is especially important in an upper secondary school context because the learners are still inexperienced in understanding and advocating for their own academic and professional goals, which means the teacher must actively guide them in identifying relevant language skills and real-world applications for their interests and potential career paths.

Anthony (2018) emphasises the need for a teacher to be competent and flexible to efficiently address the needs of different learner groups. Consequently, ESP teachers are required to engage in needs analysis, research the target context, design the course syllabus, select appropriate content, develop teaching materials, and continuously monitor and evaluate both student progress and the overall effectiveness of the course. Dudley-Evans and St. John

(1998) extend this list by emphasising the teacher's role as a collaborator, given that ESP course development requires cooperation with various stakeholders, including students, fellow educators, administrators, and other invested parties (Brown, 2016). At the upper secondary level, the ESP teacher's role also includes helping students envision their academic and professional futures, supporting motivation through relevance, and providing guidance to scaffold both language and conceptual learning. Throughout this process, maintaining a learner-centred approach remains a key priority (Anthony, 2018).

Despite the extensive list of responsibilities outlined above, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) followed by Basturkmen (2010), and later Woodrow (2018) express that ESP teachers may lack formal ESP training, which presents significant challenges. The issue is further compounded by the fact that it is possible the materials necessary for teaching an ESP course might not exist. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) attribute this issue to the disciplinary divide between the Humanities and Sciences because language teachers usually have an academic background in the Humanities, but the language training is usually necessary in scientific and technical domains. However, despite this disciplinary gap, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argue that ESP teachers do not need to be subject matter specialists as long as they are aware of their limitations and are willing to learn along with the students. Viana et al (2019) say that if the students are experts or experienced in their own fields, the dynamic between the teachers and learners is complementary in a collaborative learning environment, which is primarily true in terms of in-sessional courses but needs further consideration for foundational and pre-sessional courses.

Building on this emphasis of collaboration, Anthony (2018) and Woodrow (2018) recommend that ESP teachers explicitly acknowledge their lack of expertise and clarify their role as language teachers who are open to learning about the discipline alongside their students. Hyland (2022) further advocates for leveraging learners' domain-specific knowledge by

positioning them as both subject matter specialists and active learning resources. This approach not only enriches the learning process but also enables students to contribute to material selection, ensuring its relevance to their professional or academic needs. In doing so, teachers can foster trust, align expectations, and instil a sense of shared responsibility among learners. Thus, the core responsibility of an ESP teacher is to facilitate and assess language learning by providing the tools and environment conducive to student success. In an upper secondary school context, this also includes facilitating motivation. Once this foundational role is fulfilled, the teacher's responsibilities can extend beyond language instruction to include more expertise in the content matter to address the unique demands of ESP education, ensuring that students can effectively acquire the linguistic competencies necessary for their fields.

1.4 Needs analysis for ESP

Prior to creating the syllabus or materials for the course, it is important to have specific knowledge about the learners' target needs and learning needs (Hutchinson and Waters 1987), which are a combination of the expectations and opinions of all stakeholders (Anthony 2018). Brown (2016) even goes as far as stating that due to the definition of ESP being linked to learner needs there is no ESP without needs analysis. At the upper secondary school level, this process must be adapted to the learners' situation and experience as they might not have particularly specific academic or professional goals. Instead, the focus should be on learners' potential academic or career pathways, their subject preferences, and a readiness to interact with specialist texts. It is also important to consider the learning needs in relation to the students' age and cognitive development.

Although stakeholder perspectives are central to needs analysis, they must be interpreted critically. Basturkmen (2006) explains that many stakeholders – especially learners

unfamiliar with their target context – may not have full awareness of their needs. Nonetheless, including learners in the process can enhance motivation and foster a sense of ownership (Woodrow, 2018). Anthony (2018) has also added that even a thorough prior assessment can end in the actual answers emerging in the first class, confirming Dudley-Evans and St. John's (1998) claim that needs analysis is a constant part of the course cycle, as reassessment and adaptability are crucial characteristics of an ESP course.

Approaches to conducting needs analysis vary and reflect different theoretical perspectives. Brown (2016) describes four viewpoints on how to approach needs analysis: democratic, discrepancy, analytic, and diagnostic. The democratic viewpoint considers the wants and expectations of all stakeholders; the discrepancy view addresses the difference between expected skills and current skills; the analytic view considers what students should learn next based on language learning theories; the diagnostic view focuses on whatever elements will have a negative impact if not learnt. Woodrow (2018) agrees with Brown's discrepancy view and explains that an ESP course is typically structured around addressing the disparity between the current and expected level. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) have previously stated that a needs analysis also requires knowledge about the learners' expectations for the course, which aligns with the democratic viewpoint that Brown describes. The diagnostic viewpoint is perhaps the most pertinent to an upper secondary context, as it emphasises the acquisition of foundational skills, such as communication and academic or professional writing.

In explaining what a needs analysis entails, Basturkmen (2010) states that it involves identifying learners' current knowledge and the competencies that are required in the prospective professional or academic environments, but also considering the practical aspects and limitations of the teaching environment. Flowerdew (2013) specifies that it is not only necessary to understand the learners' current skills, but also consider other factors that influence

their learning, such as cultural background or previous learning experiences. Anthony (2018) identifies different definitions of needs: target context requirements, the gap between current skills and expected skills, and stakeholders' expectations – this suggests that a comprehensive needs analysis is theoretically possible, but probably impossible to apply to a course as a whole.

To build a course on stakeholder needs, Basturkmen (2010) outlines the stages of the development process as follows: target situation analysis to identify the tasks being performed in context, discourse analysis to identify the language used, present situation analysis to assess learner skills, learner factor analysis to identify specific learner needs, and teaching context analysis to describe the physical environment where the course will take place. Basturkmen has previously (2006) also discussed the issues with these aspects of needs analysis, raising questions about the subjectivity, unpredictability, and restrictions on the actual language learning process during the course. This means that the course designer or teacher must critically evaluate all received input on their value and feasibility.

The methods for gathering information about stakeholder needs vary depending on access to potential and past learners, specialists, study materials etc, but it is common to use questionnaires or interviews (Basturkmen 2010). Some other methods for gathering needs analysis data are text analysis, previous research, observations, language audits, simulations, corpus analysis and ethnography (Woodrow 2018). Observing and consulting professionals can be especially helpful in learning more about the target context as the professional can show or describe tasks and situations that they handle daily, which can in turn be turned into relevant tasks to carry out in the target language (Viana et al 2019). Coxhead (2018) mentions consulting experts and carrying out interviews and questionnaires but depending on the specificity of the topics, points out issues with subjectivity and a potential lack of uniformity in the answers. However, in less specific courses, expert interviews can be a helpful method in finding common topics and overlap.

While traditional tools like interviews, surveys, and diagnostic tests remain relevant, more engaging methods may be required in a school context, such as interactive classroom activities, student reflections, or digital questionnaires that can help elicit insights in a familiar format. Observations, teacher-led discussions, learner self-assessment checklists, or even classroom games can offer additional informal but valuable feedback. Basturkmen (2010) also states that the type of information to be collected should be decided by the teacher or course designer on a case-by-case basis.

In addition to learner-related aspects, the teacher or course designer needs to recognise and classify the specialised vocabulary that holds significance in the target context, which can be researched via corpus analysis both quantitatively and qualitatively (Coxhead 2018). Using corpora for needs analysis can be helpful in analysing word frequencies and finding chunks of language commonly used together (Viana et al 2019). When a tangible target context exists, necessary language can be identified through observation and discourse analysis of said target context (Basturkmen 2010). Understanding the types of vocabulary relevant to ESP helps structure learning outcomes. Coxhead (2018) and Woodrow (2018) divide vocabulary into three main categories: technical, semi-technical, and general vocabulary. Technical vocabulary pertains to discipline-specific terms not commonly utilised or comprehended outside of that particular field. Semi-technical vocabulary, also known as sub-technical vocabulary, encompasses terms prevalent within the discipline that may possess specific usage or connotations. General vocabulary consists of everyday common terms essential for communication in the language. Selecting the right mix depends on the specificity of the course and the learners' needs. For upper secondary students, semi-technical and general terms are often more achievable and versatile. Grammar instruction, while not a central focus of ESP, may also be included based on learners’ proficiency and the language demands of the target genres.

In addition to vocabulary, Viana et al (2019) suggest that needs analysis should also clarify the possible textual genres to be used in teaching. These in turn will help set criteria for some of the materials created for the course. In considering genres, it is especially important to pay attention to writing assignment choices because too much emphasis on form or specificity of content may lead to language production that does not apply to all fields that the course covers (Parkinson 2013). In an upper secondary school context, replicating highly specific industry formats may not engage students, whereas more general skills, such as interpreting reports and instructions or writing summaries can be perceived as much more valuable.

Finally, needs analysis should inform the formulation of clear and achievable learning outcomes. These outcomes must translate stakeholder and contextual insights into specific objectives that guide teaching, learning, and assessment. Brown (2016) notes that effective outcomes link perceived needs with concrete classroom tasks. Anthony (2018) and Woodward (2001) stress the importance of including sub-skills like vocabulary recognition, discourse awareness, and genre familiarity. Above all, it is important to keep in mind that the main aim is to improve the communicative competences of learners, simplifying the language for lower-level students as necessary (Kováčiková 2020). At the same time, course design must consider time constraints, available resources, and institutional expectations. A fully comprehensive needs analysis may not be feasible in every school setting, but even a simplified approach that balances learners' input with institutional goals can make ESP courses more relevant, motivating, and pedagogically sound. Effective needs analysis in upper secondary school ESP should thus be continuous, learner-inclusive, flexible, and grounded in practical realities. It should serve as both a diagnostic and pedagogical tool to inform syllabus design, materials development, and learning outcomes that reflect the learners' potential academic and professional futures.

1.5 Teaching ESP

Teaching ESP at the upper secondary level presents unique challenges and opportunities. Unlike adult learners, upper secondary students are still developing their cognitive and metacognitive skills, and their career goals or academic paths may not be fully formed. This age group often requires more structured support, and motivational strategies.

The common methodologies in ESP are often adopted from their respective specialist fields (Woodrow 2018) and mixed with those that support developing linguistic skills in contextualised communicative genres (Hyland 2022). Choosing the appropriate methodology should be based on the course objectives, and appropriate research on language learning processes and learner motivation. For instance, keeping activities on the right level of challenging is a motivational tool because if the task is too easy or too difficult, learners will get bored of it or give up without an effort (Harmer 2012). The choice of methodology is also closely connected to the teacher's skills and preferences, and sometimes the choice is a compromise between the teacher's methodological beliefs and students' preferences or needs (Harmer 2007b).

Each language skill requires specific instructional strategies, particularly within the framework of ESP. The CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020) offers valuable guidance in evaluating the suitability of these strategies by outlining specific competencies that learners should be able to demonstrate at various proficiency levels. Integrating ESP requirements with CEFR descriptors on the upper secondary school level is a useful tool in course planning, particularly when the target professional or academic context is not clearly defined. The detailed performance indicators provided by the CEFR can substitute for target context in terms of needs analysis as the expected language level upon finishing upper secondary school is B2.

In reading, learners must be taught to identify and extract information relevant to their field, using skimming, scanning, and critical analysis (Hirvela, 2013). In EGP contexts, reading for general information is more common and students are encouraged to infer meaning from the text (Harmer 2007b), but the nature of ESP implies that terminology requires more intensive work. The CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020) describes five different skills pertaining to reading – reading correspondence, reading for orientation, reading for information and argument, reading instructions, and reading as a leisure activity. In dealing with more technical texts, which require the ability to process and interpret factual data, the first and the last one are less relevant, but the other three encompass the skills previously mentioned.

Teaching listening in an ESP course means developing active listening skills, and the strategies involved in improving those skills (Goh 2013). Depending on the context, listening may be necessary in interactions, making it an important part of communication skills, or one-way listening situations. In the former situation, the listener can ask clarifying questions, but the latter offers no such possibility. The CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020) describes the following relevant oral comprehension skills: understanding as a member of a live audience, understanding announcements and instruction, understanding audio media and recordings, watching TV, film and video. The level descriptors offer examples such as lectures, operating instructions, and documentaries, which suit the ESP context. Goh (2013) explains that the skills necessary for successful listening comprehension are related to the two types of processing: bottom-up (sounds and text) and top-down (schema). Some bottom-up listening skills are sound discrimination to recognise strings of words, syntactic and vocabulary knowledge to parse the language, discourse knowledge to predict the direction of the speech, which suggests that some problems in listening skills are related to general language proficiency (Goh 2013). Listening strategies can be developed through exposure to authentic input like interviews, lectures, or instructional videos, supported by pre- and post-listening tasks that

encourage prediction, note-taking, and synthesis. In terms of ESP, the audio input should be appropriate to the context so students can become more familiar with the structure of target listening situations, such as lectures or conversations they can expect to be involved in (Goh 2013).

Speaking instruction in ESP focuses on communicative competence in professional scenarios, for example situations of negotiation or oral presentations (Feak 2013). Activities such as mock interviews, presentations, or structured debates can build learners' confidence and prepare them for real-world use. There are also fields where the spoken language used consists of very specific phrases and responses, such as Aviation English – the communication between pilots and control towers follows very specific protocols or even scripts (Feak 2013). Feak (2013) concludes that there is more emphasis on aspects of communication, such as cross-cultural competency, which are relevant to the meaning being conveyed. The relevant skills described in the CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020) are sustained monologue: giving information or putting a care and addressing audiences. The level-specific descriptors of these skills support several activities in an ESP course, especially one in the field of technology, for example giving instructions and presentations.

Writing tasks should focus on the specific types of texts that learners are likely to produce in their field (Hyland 2013). Genre and text analysis can thus support learners in understanding how the purpose, intent and audience of a text affect its structure and content (Hyland 2013). At lower levels or when approaching a new genre for the first time, it can be helpful to guide learners towards imitation by providing models to base their writings on (Harmer 2007a). Writing instruction in an ESP course should consider both the genre and the social context of the target situation and provide models the students can use as examples to illustrate what the readers in the context expect (Hyland 2013). A genre-based approach should thus be effective: students learn to plan, draft, and revise texts like reports, proposals, or lab

descriptions based on model texts and guided analysis. The CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020) offers relevant descriptors for writing reports and essays, which on B1 and B2 levels include the skills of explaining advantages/disadvantages and justifying opinions based on accumulating or synthesising information.

In addition to the four main sub-skills, the CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020) also provides descriptors for other relevant competences and language skills necessary for further studies or professional environments. The categories of interaction and mediation cover several real-life skills appropriate for an ESP course, such as information exchange, formal discussion, goal-oriented cooperation, using telecommunication, online discussions, asking for clarifications, relaying specific information, explaining data, processing texts, etc. The level descriptors help create targeted activities for specific skills that the learners might need in their future academic or professional environments.

In teaching vocabulary, Uchihara and Webb (2022) list the most common materials as coursebooks, vocabulary activity books, word lists, concordances, graded readers and audiovisual materials, and state that the materials should be chosen based on proficiency levels and the learning outcomes. Among the challenges listed in teaching vocabulary, the one that resonates with ESP, is encountering the words in varied contexts due to the nature of ESP and the chosen field for the course. Similarly to EGP, it is important to consider lexical patterns in ESP as well – vocabulary should not be taught on its own because it is more effective to learn clusters or chunks of language as they support correct use later (Woodrow 2018).

The heterogeneous nature of the learner groups also has a significant effect on the instructional strategies, especially in terms of linguistic proficiency. Therefore, the teacher must always account for the need for differentiation in the lesson. Hyland (2022) highlights that an issue with language proficiency in different target contexts is actually more connected to having

to learn new literacies and discourse practices, which confirms that the linguistic competences taught in an ESP course should be applied in a way that relates to credible real-world outcomes.

1.6 Assessing ESP

Evaluation in ESP courses should happen on two levels – assessing how well students acquired the language and skills that have been taught, and assessing the quality of the course itself in terms of content viability and whether the students were motivated to participate (Anthony 2018). As the primary goal of ESP instruction is to equip learners with the linguistic and communicative competencies required for specific professional or academic contexts, assessment should be designed to reflect the practical application of language skills in these settings. Furthermore, teachers should engage in reflective practice, analysing their own role in the learning process and making necessary adjustments to the course structure and their teaching methods.

The assessment of students' progress in ESP differs from EGP due to them usually learning for specific target contexts. As such, assessment tasks should clearly align with the content and learning outcomes of the course (Woodrow 2018). Unlike EGP, where assessment often measures general language proficiency, ESP assessment focuses on learners' ability to function effectively in field-specific settings. Douglas (2000) suggests that due to the main objective of ESP being the ability to functionally use language in the target context, assessment should be inherently communicative. He also states that assessment should consider the specificity and precision of technical language, and that language skills vary based on context, meaning that learners' language level can be higher in their fields of interest or study. This means that the purpose of testing and assessment of learning should be more narrowly focused on functional use of the technical language that is being learned. For this reason, Douglas (2000)

recommends the use of criterion-referenced testing over norm-referenced language testing because the goal is to maximise achievement of learning outcomes rather than rank the students on who has the largest vocabulary.

In general, assessment in ESP is held to the same standards as any other language assessment (Douglas 2013). The common types of assessment in ESP are diagnostic tests that can be used in needs analysis, placement tests to match learners to appropriate course levels, entry tests to exclude learners who are not proficient enough, exit tests to assess whether learners have achieved the aims of the course, and achievement and progress tests to measure progress (Hutchinson and Waters 1987, Woodrow 2018). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) describe the achievement test as the least problematic because if constructed well, it does not rely on external influences but rather provides an objective overview of what the students have learnt.

As students on an ESP course usually have different levels of general language proficiency, it is imperative that the assessment remains possible and meaningful (Woodrow 2018). Woodrow (2018) adds that due to the differences in language skills, summative assessment is probably not particularly motivating or informative because it only measures overall achievement and thus does not help the learner improve. Formative assessment, on the other hand, supports learning and provides explanations about areas of improvement by identifying the learners' strengths and weaknesses, encouraging reflection and active engagement, and as a result provides the teacher with insights about how to adjust teaching strategies to better suit the needs of the learners. As such, formative assessment methods facilitate a more learner-centred approach to language development. Formative assessment methods are also supported by the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001, 2020) and the Estonian National Curriculum (Riigi Teataja 2023), which instructs giving feedback on strengths and weaknesses in a timely manner and proposing further activities for improvement. The

curriculum also specifies that the student should receive feedback on “attainment of learning outcomes in the subject, the development of general competencies and the knowledge, skills and attitudes required by the end of upper secondary school as well as on studies regarding leading topics of the curriculum” (Riigi Teataja 2023, § 16.2).

In a foreign language classroom, the continuous feedback within a lesson needs to consider additional aspects, such as error correction to avoid mistakes fossilising (Ur 2012). In giving oral feedback, it is important to be supportive, but draw some attention to the erroneous utterance because otherwise the student might not even realise that a mistake has occurred (Ur 2012). The other significant aspect is timing – it is important to try not to disturb fluency, but make sure the correction remains relevant. Continuous written feedback should be focused and include positive comments (Ur 2012). It is also important for upper secondary students to receive continuous feedback from their peers as it can cause less anxiety than teacher feedback (Ur 2012), and it results in less time spent on it for the teacher (Woodrow 2018).

Beyond assessing individual students, evaluating the effectiveness of the ESP course itself is essential to ensure that it meets learning outcomes, maintains student engagement, and remains relevant to the target context. Evaluation of the course itself can be carried out via several methods during or at the end of the course, such as questionnaires or interviews (Basturkmen 2010). To measure the quality and effectiveness of the course, the data gathered needs to be focused and actionable (Woodrow 2018). This means that feedback should not only be collected but also systematically analysed to inform future improvements for the course.

1.7 ESP course design

Designing a language learning course involves multiple considerations, including course content, instructional approach, and assessment criteria. The prioritisation of content is

shaped by several variables, such as the topics, learner needs, language proficiency level, and course objectives. In general, the contemporary principles of course design are based in the concept of constructive alignment (Biggs 1999), meaning that clearly stated outcomes prescribe the content and teaching methods, and the assessment. In ESP contexts, this alignment is especially critical, as learners are often motivated by extrinsic goals, such as future studies or career preparation It is also important to ensure the assessment of learning outcomes happens on a higher cognitive level in Bloom's Taxonomy. Such an approach means that students solely motivated by assessment will also learn the content (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001).

While the structures of efficient language courses are similar, ESP course design differs from English for General Purposes (EGP) due to its focus on specific linguistic competencies required in professional or academic contexts. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) describe three approaches to ESP course design: language-centred, which is structures content around the language used in the target situation; skills-centred, which emphasises the underlying cognitive and communicative skills required for effective language use; and learning-centred, which aims to maximise the potential of a learning situation by focusing on how students acquire and apply language in real-life contexts. All three of these would have different focus in their learning outcomes, which depend on the results of the needs analysis. In an upper secondary school, where the learning outcomes are closely connected to the National Curriculum, an approach based on CEFR skills and their descriptors can be an appropriate starting point to developing a learning-centred course, which prioritises the key developmental goals of learner engagement and autonomy.

Basturkmen (2006) describes two approaches to ESP course design in terms of content based on whether the concept of a common core is present. If a common core is applied, part of the course content is high frequency items that are seen as universal language appropriate in all fields. The opposing notion is that instead of a common core, all language is learnt in context

and there is simply overlap between varieties, asserting that language learning should occur exclusively in context, with field-specific variations forming the basis of instruction. The difference between the two approaches can broaden or limit the specialisation of the linguistic focus of the course.

The structure of an ESP course can be presented in the form of a syllabus, outlining its content, objectives, and instructional methodology. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), in the simplest terms a syllabus defines what a student will have learned by the end of a course. However, the scope of a syllabus extends beyond mere content selection; it also establishes the pedagogical framework, sequencing, and assessment criteria necessary for effective learning. A syllabus also needs to consider the expectations and limitations set by the national curriculum and whether it is in accordance with the research on language learning processes and teaching methodologies (Ur 2012). Ur (2012) describes synthetic and analytic syllabuses, which respectively mean that the syllabus either provides a set of isolated language items or communicative abilities. In terms of constructive alignment, analytical syllabuses support learner and teacher understanding of learning though providing meaningful learning outcomes.

Based on what information the syllabus should include in addition to course content, Parkes and Harris (2002) describe the three focuses of syllabi as a contract, a permanent record, and a learning tool. The syllabus as a contract should stipulate the responsibilities of both the students and the teacher, as well as explain the policies regarding potential situations that can arise in a lesson. The syllabus as a permanent record is a documentation of the scope and depth of course content, the materials used, and how performance was assessed in a course during a specific timeframe. The benefits of this approach are mostly related to accreditation and academic credit transfers. Of the three, the syllabus as a learning tool is possibly the most appropriate for upper secondary school students as it supports students in becoming more

effective learners through developing self-management skills and providing detailed information on how to evaluate one's performance. Additionally, this kind of syllabus can help students be more involved and make conscious decisions about their learning progress.

Ur (2012) states that the syllabus should include an ordered comprehensive list of content items with explicit objectives and be available to stakeholders. Additionally, the syllabus may include an indication of a timeframe, preferred methodology, and recommendations for materials. A syllabus is usually organised into study units that may focus on skills, vocabulary, genres, functions, notions or professional content (Woodrow 2018). A mixed syllabus can include several or all of those components, combining language structures and lexical units with communicative and meaning-based functions (Ur 2012).

Anthony (2018) lists six traditional ESP syllabus types that have been in use over the years – content-based, genre-based, notional-functional, situational, skill-based, structural, and task-based. Some prioritise the language that should be taught, others the contents or skills (Basturkmen 2006). Of these, genre-based, skill-based and task-based are the most popular today due to their flexible natures and emphasis on needs rather than explicit knowledge.

In addition to the syllabus types, Anthony (2018) describes sequencing patterns within a syllabus, which can be the basis for the order of items in the course. The sequences are linear, linear with revision units, spiral, matrix, and thread. Linear sequencing builds on previously learnt units, with or without regular testing; spiral sequencing revisits key topics at increasing levels of complexity, matrix sequencing is flexible, allowing learners to focus on different aspects based on their needs; thread sequencing weaves several skills or topics together throughout the course (Anthony 2018). Basturkmen (2010) suggests that syllabus sequencing should be guided by either immediacy of need or progression in difficulty, depending on the learners' professional and academic requirements. However, sequencing remains subjective and

is largely influenced by the teacher's methodological preferences and the practical constraints of the course, such as course length, group size, and target context (Basturkmen 2006).

The next step following a clear understanding of the function and structures of a syllabus is to consider the scope of the content, and other potential limitations. For instance, depending on the needs of the learner group, a syllabus can be wide-angled or narrow-angled, meaning that more heterogeneous groups need a syllabus that covers more general topics and homogeneous groups can have very particular or specific syllabi (Basturkmen 2006). The choice between these approaches depends on the level of specificity required by the target audience.

In short, effective ESP course design requires a systematic approach to syllabus development, instructional planning, and assessment. A well-structured syllabus not only defines the scope and sequence of instruction but also serves as a contract, record, and learning tool. By incorporating principles of learner-centred instruction, needs analysis, and content relevance, an ESP course can successfully equip students with the specialised linguistic competencies required in their academic and professional pursuits.

1.8 ESP materials

Finding appropriate materials to suit the needs of an ESP course or its students is difficult because existing coursebooks are unlikely to cover the needs of different stakeholders (Anthony 2018). While existing coursebooks can offer valuable structure and pedagogical support, they are often too generalised to fully meet the learning needs of ESP students. It is even a general understanding that although designing ESP materials requires careful research, subject-matter consultation, and pedagogical expertise, it is best to provide tailored in-house

materials in order to cater to the specific learning needs of specific teaching situations (Esteban 2002).

Regardless, using coursebooks can have a lot of advantages, especially for novice teachers or someone only just starting in ESP instruction. Woodrow (2018) explains that using coursebooks can provide a framework or a syllabus that already has its systematic progression laid out with revision and testing materials provided, which can save a lot of time for the teacher in terms of lesson planning and assessment preparation. According to Anthony (2018), the advantage of using a pre-existing textbook is that the learners have a clear view of the sequencing of the topics and they can understand what is required of them and where they can expect to be at the end of the course. Learners might also have more trust in existing materials because having been published implies a professional standard. Ur (2012) has previously listed the same advantages with the addition of saving time by having ready-made texts and tasks on the appropriate level, guidance for inexperienced teachers, and learner autonomy as there exists the possibility of learning independently without having to rely on the teacher as much. If critically approached, a good coursebook provides a good structure to build supplementary ideas on, and allows students to see a map of where they are heading (Ur 2012).

However, a coursebook can be very general and superficial and thus not of interest to students in addition to the fact that if a course is dictated solely by the coursebook, it can take initiative away from the teacher (Woodrow 2018). Custom materials in such terms are also described as unpredictable and seemingly less trustworthy, but Anthony (2018) still argues for materials created by the teacher because existing materials often cannot be used or adapted to suit the learners' needs. A teacher with free reign over deciding course materials must carefully consider their own skills in evaluating and creating study materials (Anthony 2018) and have a clear syllabus that creates trust in learners. If no appropriate coursebook is available, Viana et al (2019) recommend academic publications and texts produced and consumed by experts in

the fields as a valuable source of information as they are both authentic and credible. If necessary, collaboration with subject-matter experts can help teachers validate content accuracy and relevance.

If an existing coursebook is chosen, at least parts of it are likely to need modification. There are several reasons why existing materials would need to be adapted – the information might be outdated, it might not be specific enough or is too specific, they might not be appropriate for the learners' current language levels, the carrier content might not be suitable for the learner group, or aspects of the exercises such as audio or video might no longer be available (Anthony 2018). Another reason to adapt is to avoid using the coursebook as a script to be followed as that will probably cause significant deviation from catering to learner needs (Tomlinson 2016). To effectively adapt materials, authentic texts and tasks should be incorporated wherever possible. However, adapting authentic materials can also prove complicated, as each authentic text should be evaluated using criteria that help match the texts with the target context of the course (Woodrow 2018). Additionally, the authentic text needs to be evaluated for aspects such as proficiency level, topic, genre, register, audience, etc (Stoller 2016) to ensure they are appropriate for the specific learner group.

In choosing to create or adapt materials there are other aspects to consider – creating course-specific materials, if researched well, may have a more intense effect on positive learning outcomes, but the process is also very time-consuming and can thus be expensive (Woodrow 2018). Woodrow (2018) also suggests that creating materials from scratch can be a waste of time if good materials already exist. Therefore, the most effective solution is probably a combination of adaptation and creation of activities to use alongside authentic texts. Regardless of origin, some criteria that study materials should fulfil in order to be suitable for an ESP course are authenticity, positive impact on motivation and engagement, scaffolding and support among materials, and relevance (Stoller 2016).

Stoller (2016) discusses these aspects further, pointing out potential challenges that the teacher might face while compiling materials. For example, a set of materials may have value in terms of authenticity, as it would exemplify real-life conditions, but it could also be too challenging for the learner group and thus be demotivating, especially among upper secondary school students with varying language skills. However, authenticity does not always have to come from the text but can instead exist in the purpose of the related pedagogic tasks that are an approximation of real-life situations (Stoller 2016). Stoller (2016) also emphasises the need to develop the learners' academic vocabulary and keep them actively engaged in information gathering, processing and reporting. The most important aspect is to provide coherent materials that naturally recycle vocabulary, integrate skills and systematically progress in difficulty (Stoller 2016).

A lack of suitable coursebooks combined with the fact that an ESP teacher is not usually a subject matter expert, suggests that appropriate learning materials should be the result of extensive research and/or specialist discussions. Anthony (2018) also recommends text analysis and word frequencies as ways to gather information about specialist language. Basturkmen (2010) and Woodrow (2018) emphasise that study materials should be authentic reflections of the target situations, meaning the texts were not created for the purposes of teaching or learning language.

A further aspect to consider when creating materials is the choice of appropriate real and carrier content, meaning the information to be taught should be presented in a goal-related context (Basturkmen 2010). Real content here is the actual subject matter that learners need to understand in their field and carrier content is the context or theme used to present linguistic features. ESP teachers must ensure that real content is delivered in an accessible and pedagogically sound manner, while carrier content remains engaging and relevant. For example, teaching technical writing for engineers might involve using real engineering case

studies (real content) while structuring tasks around a problem-solving scenario (carrier content).

The selection and design of ESP materials require a thoughtful balance between existing coursebooks, adapted resources, and custom-designed materials. While coursebooks provide structure and consistency, they often lack field-specific depth. On the other hand, custom materials offer greater relevance and authenticity but can be time-consuming to develop. The most effective approach is probably a combination of the two approaches that integrates adapted coursebook materials with authentic industry texts, ensuring that learners receive a targeted, engaging, and effective learning experience.

2. DESIGNING AN ESP COURSE FOR LÄHTE GYMNASIUM

The ESP course in question involves teaching the 11th grade Technology module students in Lähte Gymnasium. The course and its materials are to be created in accordance with the Estonian National Curriculum in the context of Lähte Gymnasium to support the students' language development within their field of interest and help prepare them for their future in further studies or the workforce. The course is wide angled as described by Basturkmen (2006), focusing on developing transferable academic and professional skills through subject specific carrier content to help the students develop awareness of the terminology in their chosen module and expand their understanding of technical texts that are useful for their studies.

The course will consist of 35 45-minute lessons. Due to the ongoing changes in the school curriculum, the intensity of the course is still unknown. The prognosis in April 2025 is that the following year it will run for twelve weeks, and further in the future, it will become a seven-week course. A time limitation is a traditional characteristic of ESP courses because skills are acquired and student needs change (Basturkmen 2010), but in this case the restriction is prescribed by the school curriculum. Regardless of the timespan, it is in the students' best interest to tie the content to other courses in their curriculum, so they can be reminded of previously learnt content through the development of language skills. This decision is also based on the nature of ESP as an approach that teaches the language around content that is already familiar.

The course syllabus is structured according to content and skills, grouping similar topics into task-based study units spanning one or multiple lessons. The structure of syllabus items is linear with study units consisting of increasingly difficult activities to develop language and communication skills as described by Anthony (2018). Information about course outcomes, assessment, and content is included in the syllabus handed out to the students at the beginning

of the course (Appendix 1). This syllabus serves mainly as a permanent record, but on an upper secondary level also somewhat like a learning tool (Parkes and Harris 2002), as it outlines the scope of the course, but also supports self-management skills through awareness of the requirements.

As supported by the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001, 2020) and the Estonian National Curriculum (Riigi Teataja 2023), the student assessment throughout the course includes formative assessment on completed tasks, focused feedback on content and language use in written assignments (essay, instructions), and continuous verbal feedback in the classroom. To support achievement of learning outcomes, the grading is criterion-based (Douglas 2000) and learner-centred (Woodrow 2018), using grading matrixes and providing explanations. The course also provides opportunities for peer and self-assessment, which are a part of the learning-centred approach to course design (Hutchinson and Waters 1987).

The course materials will be created and compiled based on the school's curriculum, discussions with colleagues about the module-based mandatory and elective subjects they teach, and the learning environment restrictions provided by the school's physical and financial limitations. The materials will be a combination of adaptations and new materials based on authentic texts tailored to the specific teaching situation suggested by Esteban (2002) and Woodrow (2018) as the best solution. Viana et al (2019) suggested academic sources and expert publications as authentic texts, which may be too specific or not specific enough. Such texts may be too difficult for B2-level learners and will thus have to be adapted for learner proficiency. In this particular case, which is without a tangible target context, authenticity is also incorporated into pedagogic tasks related to approximations of real-life situations (Stoller 2016). The proposed course does not have a coursebook, because although it could provide visible structure, the same trust in learners can be achieved by having a clear syllabus (Anthony 2018) that helps keep track of the course.

The content of the course includes classroom-instructed activities and opportunities to learn outside of the classroom as well. The content ideas are structured into a logical course outline with clear learning outcomes, as well as assessment strategies. Some possible activities for the course are presentations about the topics being covered, intensive reading of technical texts, museum visits, vocabulary related activities that would also involve collaborating with other teachers that have technical equipment in their classrooms, following and writing technical instructions or manuals, summarising and reporting information, etc. The learning outcomes focus on functional language skills as the students should be able to understand and use English technical vocabulary within the context of their specialised curriculum. The writing skills are taught using the process approach, allowing students to understand their writing through collaboration and revision because accuracy in using the terminology correctly in context is more important than the format of the assignment.

2.1 Situation analysis

The National Curriculum (Riigi Teataja 2023) lists multiple general competencies that the school should aim to develop in its students. The main focus of a technology-specific English language course would be supporting the development of competences dealing with learning, communication, mathematics, natural sciences and technology skills, entrepreneurship, and digital skills described in § 4. The leading topics of the curriculum (§ 10) that would be more emphasised in this ESP course are lifelong learning and career planning, and information environment and media use.

The National Curriculum (Riigi Teataja 2023) also describes the requirements for foreign language studies in upper secondary schools as student-centred and based on CEFR levels and skill descriptors (Council of Europe 2020), which can substitute some elements of

what is usually the target context in ESP. Students are expected to learn at least two languages – one on B1 and the other on a B2 level. The state prescribed minimum number of courses in an upper secondary school for both languages is five, but schools can add mandatory and elective courses to enhance students' skills. Students should be able to learn language in context, working both individually and cooperatively. The general learning outcomes are also listed according to the language levels. In Lähte Gymnasium, English is learnt with the expectation of reaching B2 level by the end of 12th grade, and up to a quarter of the graduating class each year also achieves the C1 level in the Cambridge Advanced English exam. Starting in the 24/25 schoolyear, Lähte Gymnasium offers students seven mandatory EGP courses, one mandatory module-based ESP course, and an elective exam preparation course in English. In further development of the school curriculum, additional elective courses have been discussed, such as a second part for the ESP courses, and a support course for those who are struggling.

Taking into account the course length and its potential timing, the content of the course in general covers several aspects of our school's technology module curriculum: the students have mandatory and elective specialised courses in intelligent computer use, programming, robotics, 3D modelling and printing, geoinformatics, engineering and smithing. They also have the opportunity to take driving lessons that involve understanding the basics of how a car works. Needs assessment will begin with analysing the content of the specialised courses and learning opportunities to allow this course to support the school curriculum.

2.2 Needs analysis

The needs analysis for the course to be created is based on the national curriculum, the school curriculum, specialist discussions with colleagues who teach the module-based specialty subjects, and student skills. As the nature of ESP course design is collaborative, the data for the

needs analysis is primarily collected via expert interviews with colleagues, but also by researching study materials, and observing students' skills and interests. The needs analysis uses the diagnostic viewpoint (Brown 2016), focusing on foundational skills that can support the students' future endeavours. This is due to the fact that 11th grade students aim to prepare for a wide variety of professions and academic fields, making target context-based needs analysis impossible. Such a learner group requires the use of materials for more general academic interest (Woodrow 2018) and can benefit from finding a common core that allows flexibility to easily incorporate students' interests (Brown 2016).

As there is no tangible target context, the course content is determined by knowledge that should already be acquired, so regardless of the missing target context, the students can still be in the role of subject area experts of an in-sessional ESP course, as several authors position them (i.e. Hutchinson and Waters 1987, Woodrow 2018, Viana et al 2019). This means the course is a general approach to specific language and as such could be classified partly as English for General Academic Purposes, partly English for Science and Technology, and in part English for General Occupational Purposes.

The content of the course is based on the following general and module-specific courses offered in our school curriculum in 10th and the first half of 11th grade: intelligent computer use (offered to all students), programming, robotics, 3D modelling. As an attempt of consulting with experts (suggested in Coxhead 2018), information about course content and technical vocabulary is gathered through colleague cooperation – an initial request for itemised course content, study materials and vocabulary, followed by additional questions where necessary. This lays the foundation for the teacher to learn along with the students to gather necessary expertise (Viana et al 2019). In the same time frame, the school also offers courses for technical drawing, smithing, driving, geoinformatics, and practical physics but cooperation with the three former teachers failed to produce usable information and the latter subject was not yet on the

list of subjects when the initial outline for the course was drafted. Geoinformatics is new in the school and was not added due to time constraints. The last subject is currently left out of consideration because during the needs analysis process the school is undergoing changes in the curriculum. As the new school curriculum is still in development, the ESP course will require regular revision and updates. This means the expectations and opinions of potential stakeholders are still being formulated in terms of which subject areas need to be included in the ESP course. It is thus especially important the course is kept adaptable, and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. In further development of the course the possibilities of incorporating new subjects will also be considered, as well as further specialist discussions.

The existing linguistic skillsets of the learners in Lähte Gymnasium vary considerably. While in EGP classes the students are divided into groups based on their existing language skills, the ESP course will see grouping based on chosen modules. This means that within the single potential learner group, the language levels can vary from below B1 to nearing C1. In such conditions, the ESP course must be flexible and offer a myriad of differentiated learning opportunities. To improve language skills, the course uses a wide-angled approach (Basturkmen 2010) focusing on general and semi-technical vocabulary (Coxhead 2018, Woodrow 2018) prevalent in subjects the students have participated in. For better adaptability of the course, the study materials of those subjects can be analysed for frequency and overlap and turned into accessible wordlists.

With the lack of a tangible target context, there is also no measurable gap to fill in the students' skills or knowledge. There is no situational end goal to meet, which means the school or the language teachers will have to set very clear course and learning outcomes to provide the disparity between current skills and target skills that an ESP course would normally attempt to bridge. A course taught through learning outcomes is supported by the concept of constructive

alignment (Biggs 1999) as one of the more effective ways of engaging students in meaningful learning and potentially increasing motivation.

The general motivation levels of the student population in Lähte Gymnasium are just as uneven as the language skills – as upper secondary students, they lack the external motivators that an adult student enrolled in an ESP course might have for wanting to learn language for specific situations they need to handle in an academic or workplace setting. The internal motivations for wanting to learn a language for the sake of proficiency is also questionable as they have not had the opportunity to choose this course for themselves. Therefore, it is probably even more important for the teacher to explain the reasoning behind the course and the roles of the students and the teacher in its process, than it would be for a course that takes place in a more usual ESP context (Anthony 2018, Woodrow 2018). Upper secondary students might not be aware of the necessity or positive effects of a specific language course and a clear explanation could be a motivator for active participation. To sustain motivation, it is equally crucial to keep the activities on the right level of challenging to avoid boredom and giving up (Harmer 2012).

It is also important to consider the physical learning environment, which is a classroom for 20 students plus the surrounding school grounds. There are also opportunities for excursions, provided these can be timed in unison with other school subjects to lessen the potential impact on learning in other school subjects. For this reason, the course includes a flexible field trip unit that can be moved to an appropriate place in the course. As Lähte Gymnasium is also a member of the Schools in Motion programme, the course should involve opportunities to move around either inside the classroom or in the form of outdoor lessons. While the physical limitations of the classroom are somewhat constrained, it is still possible to get up to retrieve learning materials, formulate groups or complete activities.

2.3 Course outline and content

Target group: 11th grade Technology Module students in Lähte Gymnasium, estimated group size is 12-16 students

Course length: 35 lessons (45 minutes), 3 OR 5 times a week

Course aims: The course aims to build students' English language competence through technology-related content; enhance students' technical vocabulary and communication skills; foster collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity in English through practical and real-world tasks; prepare students to understand and communicate technical and scientific information effectively.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1) understand and use key vocabulary related to technology and innovation;

2) use persuasive language to convince listeners through a product pitch;

3) interpret and summarise technical texts, videos, podcasts, and diagrams;

3) write an essay using persuasive language to explain and justify their viewpoint;

4) analyse, simplify, and explain complex technological concepts;

5) produce clear instructions for completing a technical task.

Assessment:

The course grade consists of five final assignment grades of the study units. Each assignment must be completed in class on a satisfactory level (at least a grade 3). Feedback of practical

assignments is formative and focused on the learning outcomes. In case of absences, the student will contact the teacher for further instructions as soon as possible.

The mandatory assignments for the course are an oral product pitch (in pairs), a summary of a technical text, a persuasive essay, a written simplification of a technical text, and a written set of instructions.

Course outline:

	Main content	**Learning outcomes**	**Assessment**
1	**Introduction**		
	Course overview – students are introduced to the syllabus and assessment criteria, followed by a general discussion about expectations and the topics of the course.	1) Students understand the course requirements. 2) Students express their interests and expectations. 3) Students activate prior general knowledge.	1) Active participation in discussion.
2	**Information age**		
	Vocabulary work and factual information necessary for the unit	1) Students identify and use vocabulary related to the information age. 2) Students use new vocabulary to describe technological impact on society.	1) Completion and accuracy of vocabulary activities. 2) Use of vocabulary in presenting a summary of a technological trend and its societal effects OR a structured discussion around a prompt.
	Website scavenger hunt/information search activities/research simulation (reading for orientation)	1) Students navigate English-language website to search for specific information. 2) Students identify the relevance and usefulness of particular sections for the task at hand. 3) Students independently read varied authentic texts and complete related activities.	1) Completion and factual accuracy of worksheet. 2) Documentation of the search process – students briefly explain how they found the information and why they deemed it relevant.

	Team puzzle/escape room-style problem solving (goal-oriented co-operation)	1) Students understand detailed instructions. 2) Students speculate about causes or consequences, weighing advantages and disadvantages of different approaches. 3) Students help along the progress of the work by inviting others to join in and express their thoughts.	1) Completion of puzzle. 2) Discussion of potential causes, consequences, and the pros and cons of possible solutions. 3) Use of interactional strategies, such as asking open-ended questions, encouraging input, and managing group dynamics.
3	**Inventing and patenting**		
	Vocabulary work and factual information necessary for the unit	1) Students understand and use terminology related to innovation and patents. 2) Students discuss important inventions and their impact on the world.	1) Completion and accuracy of vocabulary activities. 2) Use of vocabulary in presenting a summary of an invention and its impact OR a structured discussion around a prompt.
	Interviews with experts – communication activities with information gaps, etc (understanding the interlocutor, sustained monologue: giving information)	1) Students take detailed notes on oral input. 2) Students provide detailed information with relevant explanations and comments orally.	1) Accuracy of information gathered in the interviewing assignment. 2) Presenting the information.
	Group project on creating a product (online collaboration skills) – students work in pairs	1) Students co-develop a product using collaborative digital tools. 2) Students plan and divide tasks, and document the process.	1) Successful collaboration proved by screenshots or version histories. 2) Efficient use of digital tools assessed via self-evaluation checklist.
	Instruction and writing a product pitch – students work in pairs	1) Students write a concise, engaging, and informative pitch using persuasive language.	1) Continuous monitoring and oral feedback.
	Pitching the product (sustained monologue: presenting information) – students work in pairs	1) Students deliver a coherent, engaging presentation. 2) Students support ideas with explanations and visuals.	1) Assessment and focused written feedback based on a grading matrix. 2) Peer evaluation of clarity and persuasion skills.

4	**Computers and machines**		
	Vocabulary work and factual information necessary for the unit	1) Students use topic-specific vocabulary related to computers and machinery.	1) Completion and accuracy of vocabulary activities. 2) Use of vocabulary in a structured discussion around a prompt.
	Gathering information from video material (understanding TV, film, video)	1) Students extract key points and supporting detail from visual media.	1) Quality of notes – self and peer evaluation based on a matrix or a checklist.
	How to interpret charts (explaining data)	1) Students describe trends, comparisons, and implications shown in data. 2) Students use appropriate vocabulary to describe data.	1) Accuracy of content in brief spoken analysis of a visual data set. 2) Accuracy of vocabulary use in brief spoken analysis of a visual data set.
	Data swap activities based on charts (information exchange)	1) Students exchange information accurately.	1) Accuracy of extracted information. 2) Accuracy of exchanged information.
	Skimming and scanning texts for relevance and specific information	1) Students locate specific information efficiently. 2) Students differentiate between relevant and irrelevant text.	1) Completion and accuracy of worksheet – students have limited time to find answers using keywords. 2) Justifications for categorising paragraphs as relevant or irrelevant. 3) Annotations on a text – underlining relevant information and crossing out or commenting on irrelevant parts, with reasons.
	Summarising a report/technical text based on requirements (relaying specific information)	1) Students condense main points and avoid unnecessary details. 2) Students present clear and concise summaries.	1) Assessment and focused written feedback based on a grading matrix (Appendix 2).
5	**Programming**		

	Vocabulary work and factual information necessary for the unit	1) Students use vocabulary related to programming concepts and environments.	1) Completion and accuracy of vocabulary activities. 2) Use of vocabulary in a structured discussion around a prompt.
	Podcast (understanding audio media) and discussion (formal conversation)	1) Students identify information content, viewpoints, and attitudes in audio media. 2) Students express their ideas and opinions with precision and respond to arguments convincingly. 3) Students account for and sustain their opinions in discussion by providing relevant explanations, arguments, and comments.	1) Accuracy and completion of listening worksheet. 2) Active participation in discussion – in small groups, students engage in an informal debate, responding directly to counterarguments.
	Working with articles that have opposing views (reading for argument)	1) Students identify arguments and counterarguments. 2) Students evaluate strengths of positions.	1) Completion and accuracy of argument identification worksheet. 2) Quality of reasoning for strengths of arguments.
	Persuasive speaking, e.g. reasons for banning a tech solution (sustained monologue: putting a case) – students work in pairs	1) Students structure an oral argument. 2) Students persuade with relevant reasoning.	1) Peer feedback on quality of argument based on a rubric.
	Practising writing a persuasive essay – structure of the paper, writing good arguments, reasoning	1) Students provide appropriate reasoning for their arguments. 2) Students write clear and concise paragraphs to present arguments.	1) Improvements made to paragraphs based on oral feedback on structure, relevance of reasoning, and use of examples or evidence to support the argument.
	Writing a persuasive essay	1) Students write a successfully persuasive essay using appropriate genre conventions.	1) Assessment and focused written feedback based on a grading matrix.
6	**Artificial Intelligence and Large Language Models**		

	Vocabulary work and factual information necessary for the unit	1) Students understand and use key AI-related terms. 2) Students contextualise terms in real-world examples.	1) Completion and accuracy of vocabulary activities. 2) Use of vocabulary in a structured discussion around a prompt.
	TED talk or other lecture (understanding as a member of a live audience), note-taking	1) Students take notes on points that strike them as important or need further questioning. 2) Students discuss strategies for understanding difficult texts.	1) Quality and relevance of notes. 2) Contribution to post-lecture discussion reflecting on why the points were noted. 3) Discussion about the strategies for comprehension (e.g., skimming, re-reading, using context, vocabulary strategies).
	Jargon-heavy language – inferring meaning from text (e.g. transcript of the lecture watched in the previous lesson and a related text), working with vocabulary	1) Students guess meanings from context. 2) Students develop strategies for working with unfamiliar vocabulary.	1) Completion and accuracy of matching, cloze, or definition tasks. 2) Use and explanation of strategies (e.g., identifying word parts, using context, consulting a glossary) to determine meaning.
	Jargon-heavy language – asking for clarification	1) Students ask follow-up questions to check that they have understood what someone intended to say. 2) Students ask for clarification to ensure they understand complex ideas.	1) Successful explanation of the main points of a jargon-heavy text. 2) Clarification questions logged and assessed on relevance and appropriateness.
	Creating visual simplified explanations (strategies to explain a concept)	1) Students visually represent technical content clearly. 2) Students adapt for a target audience.	1) Posters or infographics assessed on clarity, relevance, creativity.
	Explaining technical texts in simpler ways (reading for instruction, simplifying a text)	1) Students identify the main ideas and purpose of a technical text. 2) Students make the content of a text more	1) Peer and teacher evaluation of simplified text versions using clarity and audience-appropriateness criteria.

		accessible by adding examples, reasoning and explanatory comments.	
	Rewriting a complex text (strategies to simplify a text)	1) Students simplify a text by deleting the parts that do not add new information that is relevant for a given audience to make the significant content more accessible for them. 2) Students identify related or repeated information in different parts of a text and merge it to make the essential message clearer.	1) Written product assessed using clarity and accessibility grading matrix. 2) Annotations for the original text briefly explaining which parts were removed or merged and why.
7	**Robotics and 3D technology**		
	Vocabulary work and factual information necessary for the unit	1) Students use key vocabulary related to robotics and 3D technology in context. 2) Students use the acquired vocabulary to describe the function and relevance of a specific technology.	1) Completion and accuracy of vocabulary activities. 2) Use of vocabulary in a structured discussion around a prompt.
	Building a robot/house according to oral instructions (giving and listening for instruction) – students describe what to do to a partner	1) Students follow oral instructions to complete a simple assembling task. 2) Students give clear and accurate spoken instructions.	1) Accuracy in following steps and attention to sequencing. 2) Ability to ask clarifying questions. 3) Successful completion of the build based on instruction.
	How to write good instructions	1) Students describe the structural and linguistic conventions of instructional texts. 2) Students identify common errors or weaknesses in poorly written instructions.	1) Oral analysis of a recipe, manual, or how-to guide on structural and linguistic features (headings, sequencing, imperatives, etc). 2) Diagnostic writing activity to express awareness of structure and linguistic conventions.

			3) Self/peer assessment checklist.
	Writing instructions, evaluating others	1) Students write a well-structured set of instructions for uring or operating a device, with clear steps and accurate language. 2) Students provide focused feedback to each other on clarity.	1) Students receive a grade based on a rubric assessing structure, language accuracy, use of technical terminology, clarity and conciseness. 2) Peer assessment form – other students follow the instructions at home and report back on the usability of the instructions.
8	**Museum visit**		
	Field trip – for example the computer museum in UT Delta building	1) Students observe and interact with real-world technology exhibits. 2) Students ask questions and take notes.	1) Completion of observation/note-taking sheet, assessed for completeness, relevance, and clarity (not grammar). 2) Engagement with exhibits and/or museum guide documented on the note-taking sheet.
	Follow-up activities	1) Students reflect on and present insights from the visit. 2) Students connect real-world observations with course content.	1) Peer-reviewed creative reflection activity as if commenting on an online post (photo essay or short video). 2) Connections made on a concept map or infographic.
9	**Course review**		
	Discussion of course topics – feedback on what was interesting, seemed necessary, and whether their expectations were met.	1) Students summarise what they learnt on the course. 2) Students analyse their expectations in the context of what they learnt. 3) Students assess their achievement on the course.	1) Active participation in discussion summarising key concepts and skills. 2) Oral/written feedback to the course – answering questions or prompts. 3) Self-evaluation based on a rubric with short justifications.

2.4 Discussion of lesson activities

The lesson sequence is designed to progressively develop students' academic and professional language skills through task-based and content-integrated instruction. Activities reflect principles of ESP pedagogy, drawing from Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Within a study unit, the activities support completing the final assignment through using different skills. The course structure allows for differentiation and learner autonomy, with final assignments in each unit requiring synthesis of vocabulary, language functions, and content knowledge, meaning the activities increase in cognitive difficulty as described in Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson and Kratwohl 2001). Students also have multiple opportunities for self and peer assessment, supporting skills emphasised in the Estonian National Curriculum (Riigi Teataja 2023).

In the introductory lesson, the students receive a syllabus to explain the course (Appendix 1), and they are introduced to the course structure and requirements. The teacher then facilitates a discussion about students' interests, expectations, and learning goals to make final adjustments to course materials – for example, replacing content perceived as unengaging. For this purpose, the introductory lesson serves as the final stage of pre-learning needs analysis, ensuring the content is motivating and contextually relevant, which reiterates Anthony's claim about some actual needs emerging in the first lesson (2018)..

The first unit, *The Information Age*, begins with vocabulary-building activities such as brainstorming, mind mapping, categorising, matching definitions, and using target vocabulary in cloze or matching tasks. The choice of activities is based on that it is important for students to encounter the vocabulary both orally and in written form, receptively and productively (Ur 2012). This approach pre-teaches semi-technical vocabulary (Harmer 2007b) pulled from future

activities, ensuring that students encounter the vocabulary multiple times (Ur 2012). The lesson concludes with a discussion on the societal impact of digital advancement, developing students' ability to express abstract ideas. In the second lesson, students complete a website scavenger hunt using an information gap activity. Beforehand, they discuss the features of user-friendly websites and common content structures to activate schematic knowledge. The third lesson focuses on collaboration and problem-solving through digital-themed puzzles or escape-room-style challenges, requiring students to follow instructions, find information, share ideas, and choose effective strategies to continue. In addition to increasing student speaking time (Harmer 2007b), groupwork serves to motivate and develop cooperation skills (Ur 2012).

The second unit, *Inventing and Patenting*, starts with a video or reading on innovation and patent concepts, followed by vocabulary work using activity formats familiar from the previous unit, supporting continuity as well. The lesson ends with discussions on influential inventions, allowing opportunities to converse with peers and express opinions to the class. In the next session, students explore information exchange through an interview-based jigsaw activity to foster listening comprehension and purposeful information exchange. They first work in expert groups to understand different texts, then interview peers from other groups to complete a worksheet, later dividing into groups where all original groups and all different worksheets are represented to share and verify the information. This scaffolds authentic communication and content comprehension by simulating real-life situations (Ur 2012). Every interviewer should get a chance to present their information. The teacher moves between groups to give advice and feedback. In the following lesson, students collaborate in pairs using digital tools to design a product idea. This is followed by instruction on writing effective product pitches, with a focus on using persuasive vocabulary. In-class writing is encouraged because the teacher can provide feedback and models to support less proficient students (Harmer 2007a, Hyland 2013). The unit concludes with 2-3-minute product presentations to develop public

speaking skills, after which peers vote on the most and least convincing pitches. It is an opportunity to speak on students' own level (Ur 2012) in a task that has real-world use, which helps build confidence (Feak 2013). As the assignment allows choices in topic, student interest is also a supporting and motivating factor (Ur 2012). The assessment of the product pitch is based on a grading matrix that makes allowances to language proficiency by giving value to other aspects of the task, such as genre conventions and structure.

The content of the third unit is related to computers and machines. Again, the students start with targeted vocabulary practice, followed by an opportunity to watch someone explain data and take notes on the key points, developing receptive academic listening skills. The activity uses authentic input, as recommended by Goh (2013), with the added bonus of pausing when explanations are needed to support mixed-level learners (Ur 2012). The next lesson focuses on practical interpretation of charts, graphs and tables through language used to describe trends, make comparisons, and describe implications shown in the data. Then, a lesson on interpreting charts and exchanging information in oral and written forms on information gap worksheets. Students also practice skimming and scanning to find relevant texts and locate specific useful information in a text to fill in a worksheet that becomes a sample of a summary. The reading skills are discussed by Hirvela (2013) and are a part of the CEFR descriptors (Council of Europe 2020). The final assignment of this unit is to write a summary based on a semi-technical text that uses charts or graphs. A sample grading matrix for this assignment can be seen in Appendix 2.

The unit on programming aims to develop persuasive language skills. After vocabulary work and a listening activity to identify opinions and attitudes, students discuss content to develop analytical skills. In the next lesson, the students work with texts presenting opposing arguments. They are asked to identify the opinions and evaluate the strengths of the positions on a worksheet, compare the answers with a partner, and decide together, which are the stronger

arguments and why. Students thus work on detailed understanding of the text and reading between the lines (Ur 2012). For the next lesson, students prepare opinions at home for a semi-structured debate in groups of four – two for and two against – to try to persuade classmates with relevant reasoning. Oral persuasive skills are followed by an explanation of writing a persuasive essay through practising writing paragraphs, and eventually a full essay. Starting with improving paragraphs before moving on to a full essay is part of the process writing approach (Ur 2012). The unit highlights how ESP instruction can support both spoken and written argumentation skills relevant for academic and technical contexts.

The unit on AI and Large Language Models focuses on simplifying complex and jargon-heavy texts. The first lesson introduces relevant vocabulary in familiar methods. In the second lesson, the students watch a TED talk or a lecture on the topic, taking notes on what strikes them as important and what needs further questioning. The students then discuss how much they understood and what helped them understand better to raise metacognitive awareness. In the following lesson, students work with a jargon-heavy text and discuss strategies of understanding unfamiliar vocabulary in context. Then, students use online tools to clarify the text (search engines, AI models, etc). The following lesson will be spent on creating visual aides to help understand the complex text, enhancing multimodal competences. Then students receive a new text and they can apply knowledge of previously used tools to explain the texts to their peers. The final assignment is a written simplification of a complex jargon-heavy text in suitable register and accessible language. The texts offered in these lessons are differentiated, allowing students to make choices on topics of interest and language level. The skills highlighted in this unit are based on CEFR skill descriptors for reading and mediating (Council of Europe 2020).

The unit on robotics and 3D technology focuses on giving and receiving clear instructions. The students work on vocabulary, then orally give each other instructions to build or draw an object, learn about the structure of written instructions and the importance of clarity,

finishing the unit with a written set of instructions for building or operating a relevant device. The students have an opportunity to evaluate each others' work on clarity. This unit links linguistic precision to real-world functionality, which is central to ESP (Basturkmen 2010).

The field trip lessons can be moved to different points in the course, as leaving the school with a group of students often depends on multiple factors. In the museum the students will observe and interact with real-life objects, ask questions, and take notes. As a follow-up activity, students will choose an exhibit they saw and connect it to course content. If the trip takes place in the middle or beginning of the course, students are encouraged to speculate about how the topic can be approached in the course. The assessment strategies depend on the timing of the visit, as the students will need to connect the visit to their own interests or to the topics of the syllabus because interest supports meaningful learning (Ur 2012).

The final lesson of the course will focus on course review. Students discuss topics and activities, using the syllabus to help them keep track of the discussion. Students express likes and dislikes about the course, what was motivating, and what could there have been more or less of. Self-assessment and reflection are skills valued by the Estonian National Curriculum (Riigi Teataja 2023). These thoughts will also be anonymously put into writing as responses to a Google Forms questionnaire for the teacher to use for improving the course in the future, as reassessment and course evaluation are crucial parts of ESP needs analysis (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998).

Overall, the units are designed to incrementally develop vocabulary, skills, and communicative competence, leading to final tasks that reflect the integration of language and content. This structure supports diverse learners in upper secondary ESP contexts through task variety, flexibility, and relevance in terms of both accessibility of the learning materials and assessment scaled to student skills.

2.5 Potential challenges and solutions

Teaching ESP in an upper secondary school context presents a range of pedagogical and practical challenges. In terms of in-sessional ESP courses, there may be concerns about the students' limited or uneven subject matter knowledge, which can hinder their ability to engage with the subject field specific content in a meaningful way. Although the course aligns with topics from students' module-specific curricula, there is no guarantee they have fully understood or retained this content. It is also not unheard of in Lähte Gymnasium that a student switches study modules before the 11th grade, further complicating the consistency of background knowledge. To address this, the course integrates differentiated instruction, allowing students to choose tasks aligned with their interests and strengths – for example, supporting learner autonomy by offering a selection of varied source texts in the AI unit.

In relation to subject matter knowledge, the students at this age might also not have clearly defined academic or career goals, which can affect their motivation and perception of content relevance and thus complicate engagement with the course content. While students have chosen a general study track, their choices may also be driven by external incentives rather than genuine interest, such as the free driving lessons that Lähte Gymnasium offers Technology module students. Therefore, the teacher of this course will have to navigate diverse and often inconsistent learner expectations. To engage this diverse group, the course emphasises skill-building through flexible, task-based learning. In the Programming unit, for instance, students practice argumentation and persuasive writing – skills relevant across multiple contexts – thus serving both content and language learning goals.

The range of fields encompassed by the term *technology* and the inconsistency of the students' long-term interests have a significant impact on the specificity of the proposed ESP course. Unlike traditional ESP, which benefits from clearly defined learner goals (e.g., business,

medical, or legal English), upper secondary level learners lack the stability and specialisation to justify highly targeted instruction. A course that focuses too narrowly on one subfield risks alienating learners who are not interested or lack the necessary foundational knowledge. These students require broader, more adaptable content. The course, therefore, draws from familiar topics and emphasises transferable skills and vocabulary. The lesson activities are chosen with adaptability in mind, allowing students to learn more technical language as well as skills they might need in future academic or professional careers. Ultimately, the lack of stable specialisation in upper secondary education still limits the extent to which the proposed ESP course can adhere to the traditional principles of ESP. In this context, the course must function as a hybrid, blending general academic skills with elements of specialised language instruction in a way that is developmentally appropriate, pedagogically sound, and motivating for a diverse learner population.

Another challenge faced by the teacher of this course is the heterogeneous language proficiency of the learner group – the 10th grade placement test results within one class can vary from a score in the twenties to in the high nineties and it is unlikely that the lower extreme will have bridged the gap sufficiently before the ESP course begins. This means that uniform tasks and assessment are impractical. The course accommodates varying levels through differentiated expectations – for example, in essays or presentations – and collaborative tasks that promote peer learning (Ur 2012, Harmer 2007b). Formative assessment, which is performance-based and criteria-driven emphasises communicative effectiveness and task completion rather than strict grammatical accuracy, ensuring inclusivity without compromising educational quality or expectations (Woodrow 2018). The more skilled students usually cause less problems, and their work can be supplemented with open-ended or optional extensions that provide interesting input or develop critical thinking skills (Ur 2012). The less skilled students can have a multitude of underlying reasons for struggling, some of which the teacher can

address and possibly help with by ensuring all tasks are doable by the students, keeping expectations high, and praising when it is deserved (Ur 2012). Supporting various language levels in the classroom on specialist topics that may include a lot of technical language might involve not only creating opportunities for students to speak and write according to their own skills, but also adding opportunities to read and listen on a proficiency level that is not too difficult nor too easy for them (Ur 2012). Variation makes allowances for everyone to feel a sense of achievement, which can in turn have an effect on motivation (Harmer 2007b). This aspect of adaptability could, for example, involve graded readers or adapting texts for multiple levels to be used in class simultaneously. Allowing the students multi-level learning options would also allow them to become aware of and take more responsibility for their learning (Woodrow 2018). It is likely that there are students who will at least initially choose the simpler options, but they are just as likely to become motivated to prefer more difficult texts simply because of a desire not to feel bored.

Ultimately, implementing an ESP course in upper secondary education requires a modification of traditional ESP models. It involves balancing specificity with accessibility, structure with adaptability, and academic rigor with learner motivation. The proposed course is designed to navigate these tensions by fostering autonomy, supporting diverse proficiency levels, and providing content that is both relevant and developmentally appropriate.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the integration of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) into the upper secondary education curriculum, with a particular focus on the Technology module at Lähte Gymnasium. The proposed ESP course aims to bridge the some of the gap between general English proficiency and the specialised language skills required in technical fields. By aligning the course content with the school's curriculum and incorporating differentiated, task-based instruction, the course seeks to enhance students' motivation, academic readiness, and long-term language competence.

Integrating ESP at this educational level offers many advantages. By equipping students with relevant skills earlier in their educational journey, the course enhances engagement through real-world contexts and adds variety to the curriculum. The course prioritises the development of technical vocabulary and communication skills, while also cultivating essential 21st-century competencies such as collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. Through the use of authentic materials – technical texts, multimedia resources, and real-world tasks – students gain exposure to relevant language in context, making learning more meaningful. Additionally, to make up for the lack of a particularly specific target context, the course emphasises the development of transferable skills, such as summarising technical texts, writing persuasive essays, and delivering oral presentations, which are essential for success in both academic and professional settings.

The thesis also addresses some potential shortcomings of applying ESP in this particular upper secondary school context, discussing possible solutions to problems that can arise with heterogeneous interests and language levels, and student motivation at this stage of their cognitive development.

The course design principles, materials development, and assessment strategies have been tailored to address the diverse needs and proficiency levels of the learners. The course is based on a situation and needs analysis, supporting the development of a syllabus that integrates technical subjects with practical English use. This integration is achieved through the use of authentic materials, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a focus on real-world tasks that are relevant to the students' academic and professional futures.

In conclusion, the integration of ESP into the upper secondary curriculum at Lähte Gymnasium addresses the specific linguistic and communicative needs of students in the Technology module, the proposed course enhances their academic readiness, motivation, and long-term language competence. It empowers students to navigate technical subjects with confidence and supports their development as competent communicators in a globalised world. This approach to language instruction not only benefits the students but also contributes to the overall quality and relevance of the school's curriculum.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Syllabus for the Students

ENGLISH FOR TECHNOLOGY

What This Course Is About

In this course, you will learn to use English to talk about modern technology. You will learn new vocabulary, practise teamwork, and work on real-world tasks. You will speak, write, read, and listen to English in different situations connected to innovation, programming, AI, robotics, and more.

What You Will Learn

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1) use important English words connected to technology;
2) read and understand technical texts, diagrams, videos, and podcasts;
3) speak and write clearly about technical topics in English;
4) work in teams and share ideas using English;
5) make complex ideas easier to understand for other people.

How You Will Be Graded

There are five main tasks during the course. **You must complete all of them to pass**:

1. A spoken **product pitch** (in pairs)
2. A **summary** of a technical text
3. A **persuasive essay**
4. A **simplified version** of a technical text
5. A clear **set of written instructions**

All tasks will be done during class, some homework will be given to prepare for class. You will also get feedback to help you improve. If you miss class, speak to the teacher as soon as possible.

How This Course Helps You

You learn real English for real-world tech topics.
You work with authentic content (videos, articles, podcasts).
You learn by doing: speaking, writing, teamwork.
You get feedback to help you improve.

Course Units and Activities

Welcome to the Course

Learn what the course is about, talk about your own goals and interests.

Activities: group discussion

Assessment: active participation

Unit 1: The Information Age

Learn vocabulary about digital life, solve puzzles and challenges.

Activities: vocabulary games, information search, teamwork

Assessment: use of vocabulary, teamwork, problem-solving

Unit 2: Inventing and Patenting

Learn how to "sell" an idea, work with a partner to create and present a product.

Activities: interviews, product design, product pitch, teamwork

Assessment: oral product pitch (in pairs)

Unit 3: Computers and Machines

Learn how to take notes, read charts and technical texts, practise writing short summaries.

Activities: taking notes, data reading, working with texts, summarising

Assessment: summary of a technical text

Unit 4: Programming

Learn how to talk and write about technology and opinions persuasively.

Activities: listening, identifying opinions, debates, writing

Assessment: persuasive essay

Unit 5: AI and Language Models

Learn how to understand and explain difficult ideas, use diagrams and posters to explain concepts.

Activities: watching a TED Talk/lecture, group discussions, visual tasks

Assessment: simplified text, infographic/poster

Unit 6: Robotics and 3D Technology

Learn to give and follow clear instructions in English.

Activities: partner builds, instruction writing

Assessment: written instructions and peer feedback

Field Trip

Visit a technology museum and explore real examples, talk about what you learned and found interesting.

Activities: museum visit, follow-up questions

Assessment: notes or short presentation

Course Review

Look back at what you learned, give your opinion about the course.

Activities: discussion, self-assessment, feedback

Assessment: exit ticket or short reflection

Appendix 2 – Sample Grading Matrix for Summary of a Technical Text

	Task completion	**Main ideas**	**Clarity and conciseness**	**Structure**	**Language use**
5	Fully meets the task (length, tone, purpose); well-focused	All key ideas included; no important details missing	Very clear; no extra info; concise wording; not longer than a quarter of the original text	Well-organised; logical flow; proper use of paragraphs	Wide range of vocabulary; mostly accurate grammar
4	Meets most requirements; minor issues	Most key ideas included; minor details missing	Mostly clear and concise; few extra words; not longer than a third of the original text	Mostly clear and organised	Appropriate vocabulary; minor grammar mistakes
3	Partially meets requirements; missing some elements	Main ideas mostly present; some details missing	Some repetition or unclear sentences; not longer than a third of the original text	Some structure issues; may jump between ideas	Simple vocabulary; some grammar errors
2	Partially meets the task; several requirements not met	Main ideas unclear or mostly missing	Repetitive or unclear; length is more than a third of the original text	Poor or confusing structure	Limited vocabulary; frequent grammar issues
1	Task is mostly incomplete or misinterpreted	Main ideas mostly missing	Too wordy or hard to follow; length is more than half of the original text	No clear structure	Vocabulary and grammar issues hinder understanding
0	Task not attempted or irrelevant response	No clear main ideas present	No effort to be clear or concise	No structure or not enough content to evaluate	Vocabulary and grammar issues make understanding impossible

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Liidia Varrik

Designing an English for Specific Purposes Course for Lähte Gymnasium Technology Module Students [Lähte Ühisgümnaasiumi tehnoloogia õppemooduli õpilastele inglise keele erialakeele kursuse loomine]
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Märksõnad: inglise keel, erialakeel, kursuse kavandamine, gümnaasiumi õppekava

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[Autori allkiri]
Liidia Varrik

Tartus, 13.05.2025

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