

## Designing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) L2 Tasks with Web Series (WS) for TBLT Classrooms

*Anto Arockiya Anita. I & Melkies. J*

### Abstract

The study argues for the integration of Web Series (WS) to enhance language learning in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) context in the Second Language (L2) Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) classrooms. Web Series as a diverse thematic authentic text, having a simulated real-world exposure to facilitate L2 learners; further, the audio-visual episodic nature of Web Series provides contextualisation and offers an opportunity for L2 learners to align with the learners' specific learning requirement. The study offers perspectives on Web Series integration in L2 TBLT Classrooms; and provides a framework to design task cycles to enhance language competence. Incorporating Web Series in L2 TBLT classrooms is an authentic way to develop language competence for specific professional and academic requirements in an engaging and meaningful learning environment. The study also serves as a comprehensive guide for developing and implementing ESP courses in L2 TBLT classrooms with Web Series.

**Keywords:** Web Series (WS), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), second language, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), authentic

### Introduction

Web Series (WS), as a diverse and thematic authentic text, provides L2 learners with simulated real-world exposure that may facilitate their language acquisition. Hence the authentic content mirrors real-world scenarios, enables learners to engage meaningfully with language in context, fostering more effective learning (Barton & Lee, 2013). The audio-

visual, episodic nature of the Web Series contributes to contextualisation, offering an engaging way to present language that aligns with the learners' specific needs and requirements. As studies have shown, the multimodal nature of video-based content supports language learning by providing both visual and auditory cues, which are essential for understanding and producing language (Vanderplank, 2016).

Starting in the 1970s, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become popular among researchers and facilitators of second and foreign language acquisition. During the 1980s, the term "task" replaced "communicative activity" and "Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) has become a new teaching method widely applied in language classrooms (Hasan, 2014). The concept of "task" is central to task-based language teaching, which distinguishes between actual or target tasks and instructional tasks. The target task refers to language use in the world outside the classrooms, while the instructional task takes place within the classrooms (Nunan, 2004). In the ESP context, this distinction is crucial because Web Series-based tasks can be designed as instructional tasks that prepare learners for actual target tasks they are likely to encounter in their professional or academic settings.

By incorporating Web Series into L2 TBLT classrooms, facilitators can design task cycles that reflect real-world professional and academic environments, thereby improving learners' language proficiency (Ellis, 2003). This integration provides an opportunity to address specific language needs and fosters an environment in which learners can practice language in contexts that closely match their professional or academic world (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Using Web Series provides an authentic and engaging way to meet learners' needs, facilitating a deeper connection to language and its use (Cunningham, 2014).

The study further presents a framework for incorporating Web Series into L2 TBLT classrooms for designing appropriate task-based cycles that align with ESP objectives. The proposed framework for integrating Web Series into ESP-TBLT classrooms not only promotes language proficiency but also supports the development of skills needed for specific professional and academic tasks (Basturkmen, 2010). As such, the study serves as a comprehensive guide for developing and implementing ESP courses in L2 TBLT classrooms, using Web Series as a valuable pedagogical tool for engaging, meaningful, and context-rich language learning experiences.

## **Review of Literature**

A Web Series is a series of episodic content distributed over the internet. Web Series can be of various genres, such as drama, comedy, or reality television, and can be produced by independent creators or by major production companies. The history of the Web Series dates back to the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the Internet became more popular and accessible. Early Web Series were often low-budget productions independently created and distributed by individuals or small production companies (Honmode, 2019). These early productions were typically short-form and hosted on personal websites or early streaming platforms such as iFilm (1997), AtomFilms (1998), and Newgrounds (1995). As the Internet bandwidth and streaming technology evolved, Web Series began to gain greater visibility and acceptance, paving the way for platforms like YouTube (founded in 2005) to become major distribution hubs.

In the mid-2000s, streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Hulu began investing in and distributing Web Series. This has helped increase the production value and quality of Web Series and helped bring them to a wider audience. The Web Series helps introduce audiences to the unique concept of “anywhere, anytime,” where audiences can watch and interact with programmes comfortably and through personal media. The emergence of Web Series is leading to the creation of new content by digital media providers. The expansion of internet access in rural and urban areas has contributed significantly to the growth in viewership of Web Series on digital platforms.

Web Series can be an effective way to teach a language, as they offer a more engaging and interactive way to learn. Many Web Series are also available with subtitles in their original language; this can be helpful for learners who are still in the early stages of learning the language. Watching Web Series in the target language provides authentic and useful input that exposes the learner to real-life conversations in the target language. Web Series can also provide an enjoyable and engaging way for learners to practise their vocabulary and grammar. By following the storylines and characters, learners can become more invested in the learning process and motivated to improve their language acquisition.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a subfield of English language teaching (ELT) that focuses on addressing the specific linguistic and

communicative needs of learners in various professional or academic disciplines. ESP is adapted to meet the contextual and functional language requirements of learners, making it a highly pragmatic approach to language teaching (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

ESP was developed in response to the increasing demand for English language skills in disciplines such as business, medicine, law and engineering (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). The central tenet of ESP is its learner-centred approach, which emphasises the practical use of language in real-world situations. Strevens (1988) identified four essential features of ESP: it is tailored to the needs of specific learners; it is relevant to specific disciplines; it focuses on specific language registers; and its methodology differs from general English.

The integration of technology in ESP has considerably improved the language instruction by offering authentic materials, interactive learning experience and access to specialised sources (Chapelle, 2001). The use of Web Series in ESP teaching is supported by task-based language teaching (TBLT), which emphasises the role of meaningful tasks in language acquisition (Ellis, 2003). Multimedia, including web series and podcasts, is recognised as an effective tool for improving specialised language skills (Basturkmen, 2010).

## **Designing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) L2 Tasks with Web Series (WS)**

### **1. Identifying a Suitable ESP Context for L2 TBLT Classrooms**

Selecting a suitable ESP context for Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) classrooms involves analysing learners' professional or academic needs and aligning instruction with authentic language use in their specific domain. Important factors to consider when identifying an appropriate ESP context include learners' proficiency levels, vocational or academic goals, and the communicative tasks they are likely to perform in real-world settings (Hyland, 2006). For example, learners of Business English may benefit from Web Series with business negotiations, while healthcare professionals may view medical dramas to observe patient interactions and technical vocabulary in use. Conducting a thorough needs analysis helps facilitators select the most effective Web Series materials and task designs that promote meaningful language development within specialised contexts (Long, 2005). By integrating TBLT into specific

ESP contexts, facilitators can create engaging and functional language learning experiences that bridge the gap between classrooms instruction and professional communication demands.

## **2. Selection of Web Series from OTT for L2 ESP Context**

Selecting a suitable Web Series from Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms is essential for effective ESP instruction. Educators should consider factors such as authenticity, relevance to the intended professional field, linguistic complexity, and cultural appropriateness. OTT platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and other online platforms offer a variety of Web Series that can be valuable resources for language learning. For example, Web Series that depict legal procedures can be useful for law learners, while medical dramas can improve the vocabulary and communication skills of healthcare professionals. Selecting Web Series that contain realistic dialogues, professional jargon, and contextualised interactions ensures that learners are exposed to domain-specific language in meaningful contexts. Instructors should also assess the accessibility of the Web Series, including the availability of subtitles and transcripts, to facilitate comprehension and effectively support learning.

## **3. Designing L2 Tasks with Web Series for ESP Context**

Pre-tasks introduce key vocabulary, concepts, and background knowledge related to the Web Series content. This enables learners to engage more effectively with the material during task execution. During the task phase, learners watch Web Series episodes with guided tasks that focus on identifying technical terms, analysing professional discourse, and practising communicative functions relevant to their field (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 2003).

## **Implementation of Web Series-ESP Tasks in L2 TBLT Classrooms**

Web Series tasks in ESP classrooms require meticulous planning and teaching strategies to optimise learning results. Facilitators must follow a step-by-step approach, starting with an introduction to the Web Series context and the characters, followed by a guided vision and interactive discussion. The implementation of the classrooms should encourage learners to analyse real professional interactions, to identify the vocabulary specific to the field and to practise communication strategies relevant to their field (Gatehouse, 2001). Collaborative tasks such as group discussions, debates and presentations based on Web

Series scenarios can improve the participation of learners and promote communicative competence (Ellis, 2003). Learning tools reinforced by technology, including online discussion output districts and interactive language exercises, can further support the integration of Web Series ESP tasks in L2 classrooms.

### **Engaging L2 Learners in Web Series-ESP Task Cycles**

Engagement is a critical factor in the success of Web Series-ESP task cycles. To maintain learner motivation and participation, tasks should be interactive, goal-oriented, and contextually relevant. Scaffolding techniques such as guided discussions, peer collaboration, and reflective journals can help learners navigate complex dialogues and jargon. Gamification elements, such as role-playing Web Series scenarios, language quizzes, and case studies based on Web Series content, can further enhance learner engagement. Allowing learners to personalise their learning experience by selecting Web Series episodes or characters that match their professional interests can increase intrinsic motivation and facilitate deeper language acquisition.

### **Conducting Feedback Sessions on Web Series-ESP L2 in Task-based Classrooms**

Feedback plays an important role in reinforcing learning and improving language skills in Web Series-ESP tasks. Facilitators should use a combination of formative and summative feedback strategies to support learners in their language development. Peer feedback, self-assessment, and facilitator-led assessments can provide multiple perspectives on language use and task performance. Video recordings of learners' discussions and presentations based on Web Series tasks can serve as a reflective tool to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Structured feedback sessions that encourage learners to analyse their language use, discuss challenges, and set learning goals can promote continuous improvement and autonomy in language learning.

### **Sample L2 ESP Tasks with Web Series**

#### **a. Legal Context**

**Task Title:** Analysing Legal Disputes in a Web Series

**Objective:** Help learners develop the ability to identify and understand legal terminology, procedures, and strategies in real-world contexts.

**Web Series:** *The Trial - Netflix*

**Episode Name:** *Season 1, Episode 1: The Trial (Il Processo)*

### Task Description

1. Learners watch the first episode of *Il Processo*, which revolves around the trial of a man accused of murdering a young girl, characterised by complex legal procedures and ethical dilemmas.
2. Learners identify legal terms (e.g., accusation, investigated, prosecutor, reasonable doubt) and discuss how these terms are used in the trial and their meaning in the Italian legal system.
3. After viewing, learners work in pairs to simulate a courtroom scenario, taking on the roles of a lawyer, prosecutor, and judge and using the legal terminology from the episode to discuss the case.
4. Learners then write a short legal analysis of the case, focusing on how legal principles were applied in the episode.

### b. Clinical Context

**Task Title:** Diagnosis and treatment of patients in a clinical Web Series

**Objective:** Familiarise learners with medical language, clinical procedures and interaction of patients in health care.

**Web Series:** *The Good Doctor - Amazon Prime Video*

**Episode Name:** *Season 1, Episode 1: Burnt Food*

### Task Description

1. Learners watch *The Good Doctor* Season 1, episode 1, where Dr. Shaun Murphy, a young surgeon with autism and Savant syndrome, navigates on the challenges of a complex surgical case and at the same time forms relationships with hospital staff and patients.
2. Learners identify the most important medical terminology (e.g. diagnostic procedures, patient history, and emergency surgery) and discuss its use in the context of patient assistance.
3. In small groups, learners work together to diagnose a similar case presented in delivery, so that a treatment plan is drawn up using the right medical language.
4. Learners who therefore practise interactions for medical patients in role-playing, communication skills, such as explaining medical procedures and offering empathic treatments.

### c. Business Context

**Task Title:** Business Leadership and Decision-Making in a Web Series

**Objective:** Explore business leadership, strategic decision-making, and corporate culture.

**Web Series:** *The Mandalorian – Disney+*

**Episode Name:** *Season 1, Episode 1: Chapter 1: The Mandalorian*

#### Task Description

1. Learners will watch the first episode of *The Mandalorian*, focusing on the leadership style of the main character, *The Mandalorian*, as he negotiates and makes decisions in high-pressure situations, mimicking some of the decision-making skills needed in business contexts.
2. After watching the episode, learners will identify the negotiation strategies and leadership qualities that *The Mandalorian* exhibits, such as conflict mediation, risk management, and alliance building.
3. Learners will then role-play as business leaders and make decisions about a fictional business venture, using the decision-making strategies they analysed in the episode.
4. Learners then reflect on the application of these strategies in real business situations and discuss how they can adapt these skills to their own professional context.

#### Conclusion

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) continues to evolve as an important field of language education, continually adapting to the dynamic and ever-changing needs of professionals and academics across a variety of disciplines. As industries expand, global communications become more interconnected, and job expectations become more demanding, the role of ESP in teaching learners precise, subject-specific language skills becomes increasingly important. The ability to communicate effectively in disciplines such as business, healthcare, engineering, law, and technology has become a fundamental requirement for success in academic and professional settings.

To meet these needs, research suggests that an effective ESP programme

must be carefully designed and include important elements such as needs analysis, task-based learning, and technology integration to enhance learners' communication skills across subject areas. As ESP continues to develop in response to educational and technological advances, future studies should explore innovative pedagogical approaches to address challenges in ESP implementation and improve the overall effectiveness of specialised language teaching. Research should focus on emerging instructional strategies, such as AI-enhanced language learning, interdisciplinary teaching models, and the use of immersive technologies such as virtual and augmented reality to simulate professional environments. By continually refining and expanding ESP methodologies, educators and researchers can ensure that learners are equipped with the necessary linguistic and professional competencies to thrive in their respective fields, making ESP a dynamic and indispensable part of modern language education.

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**Anto Arockiya Anita. I** is a PhD Scholar at the School of Languages and Culture, Research Department of English, St. Joseph's College, Tiruchirappalli (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India).

*prof.anita.official@gmail.com*

**Melkies. J** is a PhD Research Scholar at the Research Department of English, School of Languages and Culture, St. Joseph's College, Tiruchirappalli (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India)

*melkiesj@gmail.com*