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TYPOLOGY OF ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP WRITING SKILLS OF ESP STUDENTS THROUGH AUTHENTICITY IN TBLT

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Abstract: This article addresses the integration of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and authentic materials as a structural framework for developing the professional writing skills of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students. Writing proficiency within specialized university curricula remains a critical determinant of career success, yet traditional, form-focused models often fail to capture the pragmatics of target professional environments. To bridge this gap, this paper establishes a systematic typology of writing tasks designed around authentic texts, digital environments, and professional situational interactions. Using a mixed-methods research design with a cohort of 68 undergraduate engineering and management students, the study evaluates the instructional efficacy of three primary activity categories: simulated procedural reporting, collaborative technical documentation, and professional communicative correspondence. The empirical data indicate a statistically significant enhancement in grammatical accuracy, structural coherence, and genre authenticity among the experimental group. The findings confirm that combining real-world contextual text inputs with structural task cycles actively scaffolds the lexical acquisition and pragmatic competence necessary for global professional settings.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Authenticity, Writing Skills, Typology of Activities, Higher Education.

Introduction

In modern higher professional education, mastering English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is no longer a peripheral academic component but a core requirement for career integration. Within specialized domains like computer systems, medicine, business management, and engineering, the ability to formulate written artifacts with high precision is vital [1]. However, university instructors continually face a critical challenge: standard pedagogy frequently isolates linguistic structure from operational performance. Traditional models, which lean heavily on decontextualized sentence exercises, often result in students who understand explicit grammar rules but cannot produce functionally accurate text when faced with real-world technical reports or executive correspondence [2].

To remediate these structural deficiencies, contemporary applied linguistics highlights Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as an experiential paradigm that prioritizes functional meaning over isolated grammatical form [3]. TBLT builds on the concept that target language mastery is achieved by executing goal-oriented pedagogical tasks that directly mirror real-world procedures [4]. Within an ESP framework, this pedagogical approach becomes more powerful when combined with authentic materials. Materials are considered authentic when they are produced for genuine communicative functions rather than simulated for non-native classroom instruction [5]. Using authentic professional documents—ranging from actual engineering manuals, system logs, and corporate case studies to real business agreements—exposes students to real syntax, specialized vocabulary, and established genre norms [6].

While the theoretical advantages of both TBLT and authentic content are well recognized in general English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, there remains a structural gap in how to

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systematically classify and apply these tasks to specialized professional writing instruction. A clear typology of writing activities that balances technical content, authentic input data, and structural TBLT phases is essential for structured curriculum design. This article develops a functional typology of writing activities designed specifically for ESP students. It evaluates their performance empirically through a structured classroom intervention, examining how real-world situational tasks affect technical writing proficiency.

Methodology

The empirical research was conducted over a 14-week instructional period during the 2025–2026 academic year. A mixed-methods research design was deployed to assess how a task-based framework using authentic materials affected student writing proficiency.

Participants and Context

The research population consisted of 68 undergraduate university students ($N=68$) enrolled in specialized professional tracks (Computer Engineering and International Business Management). Before the intervention, all participants completed a standardized diagnostic language examination, placing them at an intermediate level (B1/B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). The students were divided into two parallel groups:

- **Experimental Group (EG, $n=35$):** Instructed via the developed TBLT authenticity-driven writing framework.
- **Control Group (CG, $n=33$):** Instructed using standard textbook-based methods, which relied on structural grammar transformations, text comprehension questions, and non-authentic writing prompts.

Research Design and Intervention

The instructional framework for the Experimental Group followed a structured task cycle consisting of three distinct phases: the pre-task introduction, the active task cycle (incorporating draft writing and planning), and the post-task language focus [2, 3]. Authentic texts collected from active professional spaces (such as open-source technical document repositories and anonymized corporate communications) served as the primary structural input.

The developed typology categorized classroom activities into three primary task domains:

1. **Simulated Procedural Reporting:** Individual execution of incident reports, data summaries, and technical problem descriptions based on real-world system data or project failure logs.
2. **Collaborative Technical Documentation:** Group-based compilation of project proposals, system design specifications, or product user guides utilizing shared authentic data indices.
3. **Professional Communicative Correspondence:** Formulating precise corporate letters, client briefs, and inter-departmental requests where success depends on tone, style, and pragmatic accuracy.

Instruments and Data Analysis

Data collection relied on a pre-test and a post-test writing assessment. Both tests required students to produce a professional text (a project status update report or an analytical response to an operational crisis) within a strict 60-minute timeframe. The text artifacts were graded anonymously by two independent assessors using a standardized analytical rubric with four evaluation criteria: Lexical/Technical Accuracy, Structural Coherence, Genre Authenticity, and Grammatical Precision. Each criterion was scored on a scale from 1 to 5, resulting in a maximum possible score of 20 points. Statistical variance between the groups was computed using a paired-sample t-test via data analysis software, setting the significance threshold at $p < 0.05$.

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Results

The quantitative data gathered from the pre-test and post-test cycles reveal clear differences in performance between the two instructional environments.

The pre-test scores indicated that both student cohorts started the semester with comparable writing skills. The Control Group recorded a baseline mean score of 11.45 ± 1.62, while the Experimental Group registered a mean score of 11.60 ± 1.54. The initial statistical divergence between the two cohorts was non-significant ($t(66) = 0.39$, $p = 0.69$), ensuring a reliable baseline for the pedagogical experiment.

Following the 14-week pedagogical intervention, both groups demonstrated upward adjustments in their overall writing scores. However, the experimental cohort outpaced the control group across all four rubric parameters. The quantitative shifts across the specific assessment parameters are detailed in the comparison table below.

Assessment Dimension (Max 5.0)	**Control Group Pre-Test**	**Control Group Post-Test**	**Experimental Group Pre-Test**	**Experimental Group Post-Test**	**Net Gain (EG)**
Lexical/Technical Accuracy	2.90	3.25	2.95	4.40	+1.45
Structural Coherence	2.85	3.20	2.90	4.25	+1.35
Genre Authenticity	2.75	3.05	2.80	4.55	+1.75
Grammatical Precision	2.95	3.35	2.95	4.10	+1.15
Total Mean Score (Max 20.0)	**11.45**	**12.85**	**11.60**	**17.30**	**+5.70**

The post-test results show that the control group achieved a final total mean score of 12.85 ± 1.48. In contrast, the experimental group achieved a final total mean score of 17.30 ± 1.12. A paired-sample t-test confirmed that the performance growth within the experimental group was statistically highly significant ($t(34) = 14.82$, $p < 0.001$). A separate independent t-test verified a substantial final performance gap between the two cohorts ($t(66) = 13.98$, $p < 0.001$).

The most pronounced areas of growth for the experimental group were seen in **Genre Authenticity** (+1.75) and **Lexical/Technical Accuracy** (+1.45). These metrics confirm that regular exposure to actual professional documentation directly helped students master field-specific terminology and standard industry formats.

Analysis and Discussion

The empirical findings demonstrate that a structured task-based framework using authentic materials is significantly more effective for teaching professional ESP writing than standard grammar-and-text methods. The substantial improvements achieved by the experimental group occur because this methodology redefines how students engage with language in the classroom [2, 6].

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In standard ESP setups, writing tasks are often limited to artificial prompts (such as "summarize the textbook chapter" or "write a general essay about engineering"). These lack a clear, functional purpose or a real-world target audience. When students are given an authentic task, however—such as analyzing a real system failure log and compiling an official incident report—the purpose of the writing shifts completely [1, 5]. Language is no longer treated as an abstract set of rules to be memorized; instead, it becomes a practical tool used to achieve a non-linguistic outcome [4].

The task framework used in this study successfully balanced a focus on meaning with structural support for grammar and vocabulary:

[Pre-Task Phase] Expose students to authentic professional documents (e.g., industry logs, case studies).

[Task Cycle Phase] Students draft reports in small groups, prioritizing functional meaning over perfect form.

[Language Focus Phase] Instructor addresses structural errors, refining grammatical precision and technical layout.

Analyzing the individual performance metrics highlights exactly how the experimental activities drove student growth. The remarkable improvement in **Genre Authenticity** (rising from a baseline of 2.80 up to 4.55) indicates that ESP students rapidly pick up structural formatting, specialized boilerplate phrasing, and professional tone when they work directly with real corporate or technical documents [6].

In contrast, the control group struggled to move past generic, essay-style structures. Their writing often featured awkward, overly academic language that did not fit the pragmatics of actual workplace communication.

The data also reveal an important interaction between functional communication and accuracy. Even though the experimental group focused primarily on communicating meaning during the core task phases, their final scores in **Grammatical Precision** still improved significantly, climbing from 2.95 up to 4.10. This improvement supports a core principle of TBLT: when students write within a structured task framework that includes a dedicated language analysis phase, they become much more aware of grammatical forms [2, 4]. They learn to treat grammatical accuracy as an essential tool for preventing miscommunication in high-stakes professional environments, rather than just an arbitrary academic requirement.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that a structured typology of task-based activities built around authentic materials significantly accelerates the professional writing proficiency of ESP university students. Moving away from traditional, isolated grammar drills and replacing them with functional task cycles allows students to develop language skills that translate directly to the workplace. The quantitative data demonstrate that working with authentic text inputs helps students master field-specific terminology, improve structural coherence, and adopt a highly authentic professional tone.

For university departments looking to update their ESP curricula, these results support shifting away from generic textbooks. Instead, courses should be built around authentic document repositories and task-based instructional cycles. Future research should explore how this methodology can be scaled using digital learning platforms, and examine the long-term impact of task-based training on students' actual performance during professional internships and early career employment.

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