

## Study on ESP Course Design of 'Wide-angled' and 'Narrow-angled' Based on Demand Analysis

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**Abstract.** This paper is concerned with the ESP course design, its theoretical analysis and comparison between the narrow and wide angles, based on demand analysis. By practical examples overseas, we can understand their differences and characteristics.

### Introduction

ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is a kind of teaching method with definite goals and some pertinence. It emphasizes on the combination of English learning and professional learning, and its essence is to analyze and meet the different learning needs of learners as much as possible in order to improve the performance of English teaching.

Hutchinson, Waters [1] in their classic book in 1987, pointed out that the most important step in the curriculum design is to understand the target environment and the requirement analysis of the language characteristics in the target environment. The ESP course focuses on the practicality and practicalness of the language, and is guided and based on the social needs and the learners' learning needs. In order to establish the appropriate teaching mode, teaching idea and teaching content, the authors use the internationally mature demand analysis model to carry out "objective situational needs analysis" and "learner needs analysis" to the respondents.

English for specific purposes (ESP) courses are often discussed in terms of a two-way distinction between 'wide-angled' and 'narrow-angled' designs. The term 'wide angled' is used to refer to courses for learners targeting abroad work place, professional or academic field. The term 'narrow angled' is used to refer to courses for learners targeting one particular work place, professional or academic environment. Often wide-angled course designs are based on the premise that there is a set of 'generic' skills and linguistic features that are transferable across different disciplines and professional groups. Proponents of narrow-angled designs argue against this premise (Hyland 2002). This paper illustrates a number of narrow and wide-angled course designs in ESP and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the options.

Table 1. Narrow and wide-angled course designs.

type	Narrow or wide angled	Point of departure for selection of course content	Examples
1	Narrow	Analysis of needs with reference to a particular disciplines or occupations	English for pilots and air traffic controllers English for legal studies
2	Wide	Analysis of common needs with reference to a set of disciplines or occupations	English for general academic purposes English for health professionals

### ESP Course Design of 'Wide-angled' and 'Narrow-Angled'

A large number of studies on ESP have shown that demand analysis has a "centripetal" nature Basturkmen [3]. It mainly studies what learners need to learn. How learning relates to a particular

major or occupation; How lexical, syntactic and discourse structures fit with the language application of a particular specialty.

Two influential definitions of English for Specific Purposes identify ‘absolute’ and ‘variable’ characteristics of ESP. The absolute characteristics of ESP courses are listed by Strevens [4] as (1) designed to meet the specified needs of the learner (2) related in content such as themes and topics to particular disciplines, occupations and activities and (3) centered on language use in those activities. Dudley-Evans and St John [5] list them as (1) designed to meet the specific needs of the learner; (2) making use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines they serve; and (3) centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres of activities in those disciplines. There is a good deal of similarity between the two definitions above even though produced ten years apart. The similarity is twofold: ESP courses are devised on the basis of the specific work-related or academic needs of the learners and the courses offer descriptions of language use in the disciplines or occupations they serve.

ESP can be understood as concerned with disciplines or occupations either as broad fields or as specialties within fields. For example, management can be understood as a general field or as a composite of a number of specialties (such as strategic management, management accountancy, public administration, business administration). Differences in understandings are reflected in different types of ESP course designs. Some courses are designed for a group of learners with almost homogenous needs targeting one particular discipline or occupation (narrow-angled) and some are designed for a group of learners with somewhat similar needs and interests targeting a broad field (wide-angled).

This article is based on the analysis of the demand in the following sections of the narrow-angled and wide-angled ESP course design, by comparing with foreign examples to discuss the difference and characteristics.

### **Type 1: Point of Departure Analysis of Needs in a Particular Target Group**

A number of ESP courses are set up to address the needs of a group of learners who wish to enter or make progress in a particular target group. To illustrate this version of ESP I will first refer to the description of a course developed to teach English to pilots and navigators in Turkey that is described by its developers, Girginer [6] set out to familiarize themselves with the needs of the students and the language used by pilots and air traffic controllers in the work place. This led them to collect and transcribe recordings of transactions between pilots and air traffic controllers working at a nearby international airport and to interview and give questionnaires to a number of pilots and air traffic controllers already on the job.

The writers found out important information about the work of pilots and air traffic controllers and language use in these occupations. For example, it was discovered that there were in fact four distinct areas of work in air traffic control: area control (working with planes at the highest altitudes), approach control (working with planes beginning their descent), tower control (working with planes at heights lower than 3,000 feet) and ground control (working with planes that have actually landed). Air traffic controllers worked in any one of these four areas. Analysis of the transcripts showed that nearly all the transactions occurred between the air traffic controllers and pilots and that few occurred between pilots themselves. They discovered that most transactions were brief and centered on a limited number of language functions. The commonest function was making requests. The interviews brought to light perceptions of problems that the Turkish pilots and air traffic controllers had in using English in their work. One problem was that of understanding colloquial expressions such as ‘chop’ used by American pilots for turbulence. The pilots and air traffic controllers also reported a perceived need to improve their conversational English because they often faced work place situations requiring them to communicate on subjects other than technical matters. Following their investigation, the writers drew up a list of content for English for Pilots and Air Traffic Controllers course. The list involved the following items: making requests; being able to pronounce and comprehend numbers; being able to listen to multiple interactions and discern who is speaking to whom; being able to take turns and break into ongoing exchanges; being

able to understand colloquial words and phrases used in air traffic control; and taking part in conversational exchanges.

## **Type 2: Point of Departure Analysis of Needs Across Target Groups**

Like Type 1 courses, Type 2 courses also focus on learner needs. However, Type 2 courses attempt to address the common needs of learners who are heading for different but related disciplines or occupations.

Jordan [7] to learners' final purpose of language use and language environment as the main line, the ESP is divided into EAP (English for Academic Purposes) EAP and EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) or professional use English two branches. EAP refers to the English used to complete academic studies or conduct academic research exchanges. EOP refers to the English used in a certain industry or work. In a sense, EOP covers all work-related English. However, there is no clear professional boundary between the two, that is, people can do a certain job at the same time and the research work related to the job. Therefore, the ultimate purpose of EOP and EAP under ESP classification is to serve the profession. A distinction has been drawn between English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) (Blue 1993). Type 2 courses are EGAP designs. They address core academic skills (e.g. listening and note-taking, reference skills, participating in seminars and discussions, formal academic writing style) shared by different disciplines. They differ from narrow-angled ESAP courses that are concerned with the language (structures, vocabulary, academic conventions and genres) and particular communicative needs of a particular discipline, such as law or economics (Jordan 1997).

The Type 2 option can be illustrated with reference to the course focused on the development of general academic speaking skills described in Basturkmen (2012) [8]. The course was set up in response to findings from a university-wide needs analysis (Richards and Gravatt 1998) revealing student concern with their ability to participate in seminars and discussions in a university setting. Classes on the academic speaking course are composed of students from a range of subject areas, such as computer science, psychology, education, law, statistics, Asian languages and information technology. The course aims to help the learners develop skills to participate in talks and discussions for academic study. The syllabus is organized around three tasks perceived to be common enough to be relevant to students' from all subject areas: a short talk defining a term from the student's own subject area; an oral report of a survey study and an oral review of a report of an innovation.

Course content focuses on speaking skills and processes (e.g. preparing and organizing a presentation). Generic models of spoken genres are presented. For example, a generic model of a short talk is presented. Learners use this and are required to then give short talks defining a term from their own fields of study. For example, students in one class gave talks on following topics: Zone of Proximal Development, Bubble Economy and Data Compression (students of education, commerce and computer science respectively).

In a word, the primary concern of Type 1 and 2 courses is the assessment of the needs of the learners and predicting when, where and for what purposes they will use English.

## **Summary**

Students in universities often change courses, take up papers from other disciplines and take up papers with very different genres and communicative demands. The roles in work places are simply too diverse for any one ESP course to deal with in depth. It seems that ESP can never be specific enough on the one hand and on the other hand can also be too specific at the same time.

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