

DESIGNING ESP COURSES IN INDONESIA: WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

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Abstract:

This article is intended to expose the implication of the results of two long surveys on the existence of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) as a compulsory subject with various names at different universities and colleges in Indonesia. In my first research, it was found out that ESP courses were misleading, misconduct, and amburadul. This situation happened not only at the small and developing universities but also at the established and well-known universities such as University of Indonesia, Padjadjaran University, and Gadjah Mada University. This year (2007), I conducted another research funded by the government on the same topic but different research subjects at some universities in West Sumatera (Andalas Univeristy, State University of Padang, Bung Hatta University, and Eka Sakti University), particularly at three different study programs: Accounting, Engineering, and Physics. The data of this research were collected from totally 270 students, 12 ESP lecturers, 9 heads of study programs, 9 senior lecturers, and 3 TEFL experts. The findings of this research supported the previous findings that ESP faces critical problems in its design and implementation for limited professionalism of human resources. Almost all of the lecturers of the ESP courses were never been particularly prepared and trained to teach ESP. No other parties of stakeholders felt responsible for the ESP program, but the ESP lecturer. From the findings of the two researches, the question arises ‘Who should be responsible for the ESP in Indonesia?’

Key words/ phrases: *Designing, ESP, Responsibility, Indonesia, College, University.*

A. INTRODUCTION

In this article, ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is a course or some courses offered to the students of non-English departments. This course may only be followed by the students who already passed the general English course given in their first or second semester. ESP is commonly given to the students in the second or third academic year. The titles of the ESP course can be

various, such as *English for law, English for Economics, English for Chemistry, Bahasa Inggris 2*, and such other titles. By the name, all are clearly ESP courses. However, to make sure, the writer did a pilot study before the survey. Courses of ESP which are also offered for the students of English study programs are beyond this topic.

This article focuses on the discussion of who should be responsible for

the ESP course in Indonesia? This question arises because of the findings of two different researches showing that ESP courses were misleading, misconduct, and *amburadul*. In its format, this article will be divided into three main parts. The first part deals with the presentation of theoretical basis of this article. The next part of this article will be the discussion of who should be responsible for the ESP course design in Indonesia. At last, the writer presents a short conclusion.

B. THE PRIMARY CONCEPTS OF ESP

The most fundamental ideas about the basic concepts of ESP are introduced by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). They acknowledge that ESP is an approach, not product. As an approach, ESP gives more orientation to the process rather than product. ESP is programmed on the basis of needs analysis: why does the learner need to learn English? The answer to this question is gained through the analysis of: who are the learners? What language skills and language components do they need? In what context the learning process happens? The answers should be on the basis of careful needs analysis. The choice of contents and methods of teaching are also based on learners' needs. It implies that the main focus of teaching ESP is to the process of determining English skill and components related to the students' needs. To show the position of ESP in English language teaching, they figure ESP as a branch of a tree of ELT in which ESP may have sub-branches such as English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Business and Economics (EBE), and English for Social Sciences (ESS). ESP is defined by Strevens (1988) by giving several characteristics

which then critically argued by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 4-5) by proposing other additional variable characteristics, but reducing one absolute characteristics. For them, ESP is classified in the quotation below:

1. Absolute Characteristics:

- a. *ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner; ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves;*
- b. *ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.*

2. Variable Characteristics:

- a. *ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;*
- b. *ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;*
- c. *ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level;*
- d. *ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students;*
- e. *Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.*

Mackay and Palmer (1981), Carter (1983), McDonough (1984), Hutchinson and Waters (1987), and Robinson (1991) agree that ESP can be grouped into EOP (*English for Occupational Purposes*) and EEP/EAP (*English for Educational/Academic Purposes*). Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) introduce the ESP classification based on discipline or professional area such as *English for academic science and technology*, *English for Medical purposes*, and *Vocational English*. This distinction is very important since they will affect the

degree of specificity appropriate to the ESP. *EAP* refers to English as a course for academic purposes. This course is to develop English language skill of the learner for the study purposes. The term *EOP*, on the other hand, refers to English for occupation or professional purposes.

From the above conceptions, it can be concluded that, the term 'specific' in *English for specific purposes* refers to the specification of the goal and objectives, not to certain English jargon or register. The concepts of ESP can be understood from its position on the field of ELT, its characteristics, and its classification.

Theoretically, as English course the ESP development process consists of several phases. Following Graves (1996), Jordan (1997), and Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), the phases are needs analysis, determination of goals and objectives, content conceptualization, selection and development of materials and activities, organization of content and activities, and assessment and evaluation. Each step will be shortly discussed below.

1. Needs analysis

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) make a useful division of learners' needs into *necessities* (what the learner has to know to function effectively), *lacks* (what the learner knows and does not know already), and *wants* (what the learners think they need). These are discovered by a variety of means: testing; questioning and interviewing; recalling previous performance; consulting employers, teachers and others involved; collecting data such as textbooks and manuals that the learners will have to read, and then analyzing them; and investigating the situations in which the learners will use the language. Ways of

doing needs analysis can be evaluated by the same general criteria used to evaluate tests—reliability, validity, and practicality.

Necessities, lacks, and wants may all be compared against a list of learning goals for the course. An exception to this approach is to base the course on what the learners' request, in which case the lists are created by the learners. This is effective if the learners have very clear purposes for learning English which they are aware of. For example, a course for immigrants who have been in the country a few months could very effectively be based on a list of things that they want to be able to do using English. One way of making needs analysis become a central, ongoing part of a course is to set up a negotiated syllabus. This means regularly involving the learners in decision making regarding the goals, content, presentation, and assessment of the course (Clarke 1991).

In its simplest form needs analysis should (1) assess how the learners will need to use the language after they leave the course, (2) measure the learners' present level of proficiency, and (3) ask the learners what they consider to be most important for them. The outcome should be a list of tasks or language features that can be the basis for the course.

The needs analysts should realize that there are some factors which will have the strongest effect on the design of a course, such as: learners' lack of interest and knowledge of English, limited availability of time, large size of the classes, wide ranges of the students' current proficiencies, uncertainty of the students about their needs and purposes, teachers' lack of experiences and trainings, and less accessibility of learning materials. These factors should be identified and ranked in the order of

importance. Unsuccessful course designs often fail to take account of the environment questions. The importance of environment analysis is that it helps ensure that the course will be suitable, practical, and realistic.

2. Goals and Objectives

According to Graves (1996: 17) a *goal* is general statements of the overall, long term purposes of the course. Thus, they are related to the acquisition of a job in the future or the communication with the members of the target language community (Harmer, 2001). They should aim not only at the acquisition of certain knowledge and skills but also at the development of a positive attitude towards language and culture. *Objective*, on the other hand, is defined as the specific ways in which the goals will be achieved. They may refer to activities, skills, language type or a combination of them all.

It is essential to decide why a course is being taught and what the learners need to get from it. Goals can be expressed in general terms initially and be given more detail when considering the content of the course. Another issue to take into account is that the goals should be realistic; otherwise the students would be demotivated. Objectives should be congruent to the goals and relevant to how the teacher conceptualizes the content of the course (Nunan, 1988).

The goal of the ESP course will be, for example, to familiarize the students with the terminology used in their field of study. After the end of the course the learner must be able to understand, comprehend, and analyze reading texts on their own field of study. Besides, as nurturant effect, they can enrich their knowledge on their own field of study. The objectives of the ESP course can be

divided in conjunction with the four language skills for better comprehension. However, since the focus should be on particular skill, such as for developing reading comprehension skill, it should figure out the emphasis.

3. Content conceptualization

The next issue to be addressed is the content of the course, what the syllabus should include. Reilly (1988) gives some practical guidelines to syllabus choice and design:

- a. Define what students should be able to do as exactly and realistically as possible, as the result of the instruction
- b. Rank the syllabi in order of importance according to the desired outcomes
- c. Evaluate available resources match them with the syllabi
- d. Designate one or two syllabi as dominant
- e. Review how combination and integration of syllabus types can be achieved and in what proportion
- f. Translate decisions into actual teaching units

In practice, the development of a course should follow the same procedure as the development of a curriculum. Decision-making plays an important role for both curriculum and course development, the process of which includes planning stage, teaching process stage, modification/ re-planning stage, and re-teaching the course. During the whole process, decision-making and assessment is continuously taking place, so that modifications can be applied. Proliferation of new teaching methods, new concepts and models provide the teacher with many options to choose from.

4. Selection and organization of materials and activities

Choosing materials may mean development of new material, collection of various materials or adaptation of existing ones. According to Graves (1996), in order to select materials the following issues should be taken into account:

1. Effectiveness in achieving the course purposes
2. Appropriateness of the material, so that the students will feel comfortable. This means that the material will be relevant to their interests and language level.
3. Feasibility, so that the material will be in accordance with the students' capabilities and the course will not prove too difficult for them.

The source of materials for ESP course can be, according to McDonough (1984):

1. From published materials (textbooks, journals, magazines)
2. From real speech (lectures, broadcasts, seminars, conversations)
3. Specially written
4. Simplified and adapted from public materials or instances of real speech

ESP course organization, either on the lesson level or on the overall organization of the course is very important, since it provides the teacher and the students with a clear idea of what will be taught. A thorough examination of the overall curriculum provides great help in the development and organization of the content areas.

The material in an ESP course needs to be presented in a form that will

help learning. The presentation will use suitable teaching techniques and procedures, and these needs to be put together in lessons. Some lessons might consist of an unpredictable series of activities, while others might be based on a set format, where the same sequence of activities occurs in all or most of the lessons.

5. Assessment and Evaluation

Nunan (1990) states that in language teaching, including ESP, assessment is related to determination of student's proficiency whereas evaluation to the process of collecting and interpreting information about an educational program. In other words, assessment shows what the learners know and can do in English, whereas evaluation reflects students' reasons for failing or succeeding and ways of improving their learning. Both distinctions were taken into account in the course design process.

An evaluation of a course can have many purposes, the main ones being to assess whether to continue or discontinue the course or to bring about improvements in the course. Responsible curriculum design includes ongoing evaluation of the course. Introducing a "negotiated" part to a course can be a useful way of gaining some evaluation information. In this part the learners discuss and decide how they would like to use a part of the classroom time.

C. Responsibilities for the ESP Design

Who should be responsible for the design of ESP courses in Indonesia? Some might answer this question simply and some others might think that the question needs a deep or complex answer. This article is addressed to the second group in which one needs to think and consider some beneficial

factors beginning from designing the ESP courses to the evaluation.

In answering the question, the paradigm used is that ESP courses at universities should be designed following the basic concepts and previous research findings on the field of ESP. The findings of the two research presented above indicated that there were various basic and crucial problems that need extra efforts to solve. The facts have shown that ESP program at universities had never been seriously and intentionally prepared. The ESP needs new thoughts and reformulation involving high accountability and professionalism of the stakeholders.

In my mind, ESP courses at universities should not be only under responsibilities of the ESP teachers alone since most of them are not professional ESP teachers. No study programs at universities in Indonesia, including English study programs, which are responsible to train and produce ESP teachers. Some English teachers who studied abroad might have taken their major on ESP, but they are very limited in numbers. The only solution is that the ESP courses should be designed collaboratively by the whole stakeholders. As the model I introduced, Collective Collaboration Model (CCM), the ESP courses should be designed in such a way that whole parties of stakeholders collectively collaborate in a certain forum such as a seminar or a workshop to design the course. This CCM is applicable for ESP programs at any study programs and at any universities face similar problems.

To have a good understanding of this model, the words: *model*, *collaboration*, and *collective* will be shortly discussed. In this particular context, *model* is defined as a miniature of the cyclical process of the ESP program

design involving several activities of interrelated phases. The term *collaboration* used in this study is different from the concepts of collaboration used by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Jordan (1997), and Dudley-Evans and St. Johns (1998). For them, collaboration deals with cooperation of the ESP teachers and the field study experts in parts of teaching materials and teaching method. Collaboration, in my model, means cooperation of the whole stakeholders consisting of six parties (ESP teacher, students, study program experts, ESP expert, alumni working in the field of their previous study program, and the head of the study program offering the ESP course), not only cooperation among the ESP teacher and the field study expert

To strengthen the meaning of collaboration, the term *collective* is used. to clarify that: 1) collaboration is not only involving the ESP teachers and the field study teachers, but collaboration of the whole parties of stakeholders. 2) There will be intensive collaboration, discussion, negotiation among the stakeholders in form of seminar and workshop to design the ESP courses. Decision about the program should be done collectively to come to a negotiative design.

The CCM acknowledges that the first determinant activity in designing ESP program at Indonesian universities is *seminar and dissemination* of ESP basic concepts to the whole stakeholders. The dissemination is considered crucial since, based on the research findings, almost all of ESP stakeholders do not understand the basic concepts of ESP as they have to. Without good understanding of the ESP basic concepts, it is considered that good collaboration among the stakeholders will be impossible. It is after having well under-

standing of the basic concepts of ESP that the cyclical phases proposed by experts can only be done. Based on theoretical analysis, the cyclical phases of ESP program are needs analysis, formulation of objectives, determination of materials, teaching and learning process, and evaluation. Adapted from these phases, after the dissemination of the basic concepts of ESP, the cyclical phases in the CCM are collaboration in determination of needs, determination of the essences of the ESP course (title, credits, synopsis, and offering system), formulation of goal and objectives, selection of materials, plan of teaching and learning activities, plan of evaluation, and formulation of syllabus.

After the concepts of ESP are well understood by stakeholders, the next activity is collaboration in *needs analysis*. ESP course should be offered on the basis of the results of needs analysis done collaboratively by whole stakeholders. The language skill and sub-skills to develop in ESP course should be agreed by stakeholders. Needs analysis is a way of assessing needs to the ESP course through interview and questionnaire. In CCM the analysis can be done through collective agreement among stakeholders.

The next phase is *determination of the essence of the ESP course*. This phase is used to determine the title, code, credits, status, course description, and offering system of the ESP course. The information is all components to put in the university curriculum. This CCM gives opportunities to stakeholders to determine the entities in a particular seminar and workshop. The title of the course should, for example, figure out an ESP, and if possible, EAP course, not anymore general English.

The fourth phase is *determination of goals and objective of the ESP*

course. At this phase, the participants of the same field of study sit in one group to discuss and decide the goal and objective to achieve. One thing they need to understand is that the ESP course should be specifically English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Furthermore, the members of the group should also realize that effective and efficient reading comprehension strategies are the main concern through which new vocabularies, knowledge of the field of study, and learning strategies are also enriched. In addition, the development of integrated English skills should be developed through the development of reading comprehension skill as the main concern.

The next phase is *selection of teaching materials*. In this phase, not all parties of the stakeholders should be involved (in the diagram the box-line is not completed). The most important parties are the ESP teachers, EAP specialists, and the experts of the field study. They should discuss some alternatives such as material sources, appropriate contents, and particular characteristics of the materials to use. The material should be about the field study of the students. It is realized that the collaboration among these different parties is not an easy process since they are coming with different angles. However, collaboration in this phase is considered crucial and appropriate alternative since the ESP teachers need inputs from the field study experts and practices about the most appropriate material for the students. There are some points the collaborators to consider. First, ESP is characterized by authenticity of the teaching materials. The selection of the material should be based on the skill and sub-skills to develop. Dealing with the content, collaborators should realize that the ESP materials

contain *real content and carrier content*. At last, the materials should fulfil criteria of good ESP materials cited in Dona (2000), and Cook (1996).

The sixth phase is *planning of the teaching and learning activities*. At this phase, the term *no one method is the best* should be understood by stakeholders to give their suggestions to the ESP teachers about teaching methods and techniques preferable. Teaching and learning activities are much dependent on the objective to achieve and the characteristics of the material. Through developing reading comprehension skill as the major priority, the development of other skills, knowledge of the field study, vocabulary acquisition, and the development of learning skill related to the field study are integrated. The stakeholders are expected to deeply understand that ESP teaching should make use of multiple - based approach such as student - centred learning, content - based approach, process-based approach, and task - based approach to encourage active involvement of the students.

After planning the teaching and learning activities, the next phase is *planning evaluation*. The stakeholders are required to discuss how evaluation should be done. Evaluation, in this case, can be program evaluation and learning achievement. At this phase, the roles of the TEFL and ESP experts are crucial. They are responsible to guide other stakeholders in understanding the concepts of ESP evaluation, both program and learning achievement. Under their guidance, the stakeholders may come to an agreement about the evaluation.

The last phase in the ESP course design is *preparing the syllabus of the ESP course*. All groups of stakeholders should discuss the syllabus in order that

the goal and objective, teaching materials, teaching and learning activities, and evaluation predetermined are appropriately and explicitly put in the syllabus. The format of the syllabus can be various depending on the agreement among the stakeholders in a particular institution. However, the things to may attention to is that the syllabus should contain all decisions taken in the previous phases. This syllabus will much help the ESP teachers to realize the agreements in the teaching process and in the evaluation. The implementation of the whole phases will be the basis for the stakeholders to do the next cycles of ESP program design.

D. CONCLUSION

This article has discussed a research based ideas concerning the question: who is responsible for ESP courses at universities in Indonesia? This article firstly presents some basic concepts of ESP and theories of ESP design to which the idea should be based. In order that the answer of the question is referred to factual reasons, the main findings of two researches are also presented preceding the discussion of the answer of the question. It is concluded that all parties of stakeholders are responsible for designing the ESP courses.

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