

Making a case for English for Specific Purposes

Todd R. Enslen
International University of Japan

Abstract

With regard to teaching approaches in the classroom, as new ideas emerge, conflicts in ideology between researchers also surface and the teacher or administrator is left with a difficult decision. In English for Specific Purposes (ESP), a continuing debate is whether, at the tertiary level of education, the teacher should be focusing on English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) with the goal of imparting general skills that one hopes are transferable to more field specific course work or whether he/she should be teaching English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) which emphasizes similar language skills and tasks to those that the students will face in their academic fields. By using a needs analysis tool or tools to determine the skills students need in a specific field and further analyzing those skills to determine the language needs that the teacher must focus on in the classroom, a teacher or administrator can make an informed decision. This process is exemplified with a case study of implementing a business English class at a large research university in the United States. The results of this analysis indicate that an EGAP approach for upper-level undergraduates and especially graduate students is not meeting these students' specific needs. In addition, the language needs that are identified are such that the teacher would not require specific content knowledge, as the arguments against ESAP suggest, to teach the class.

Key words: Case study, ESP, EGAP, ESAP

1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) is continually changing. This can easily be seen in reviewing the various methodologies and approaches that have developed over the years, such as the Audiolingual Method, Total Physical Response and the Natural Approach. For a review of the various approaches, see Richards and Rodgers (1986). However, the changes do not just take the form of major changes in methodology. With the current emphasis on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), learner-centered approaches to teaching are emphasized. As Richards and Rodgers state, "The CLT teacher assumes a responsibility for determining and responding to learner language needs" (p. 78). Because of this focus on the learners' needs, teachers are continually updating and modifying their curriculum and materials.

This proliferation of change in the teaching of ESL does not necessarily provide answers to our teaching problems, but rather it may create questions. New ideas are adopted in a systematic way with a small number of initial innovators and grow until the growth tapers off after a critical mass. Rogers (1995) defines this process into five specific stages: *innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards*. Although this seemingly suggests that an innovation will continue to grow until it is accepted by all, in reality, it is very unlikely that any innovation or change will result in 100 percent acceptance. Since change results in a division of opinions and, therefore, a dichotomy of theories and research, the teachers/administrators who are trying to decide on an approach are left in a difficult position because we must try to distinguish which side of the fence we are going to stand on.

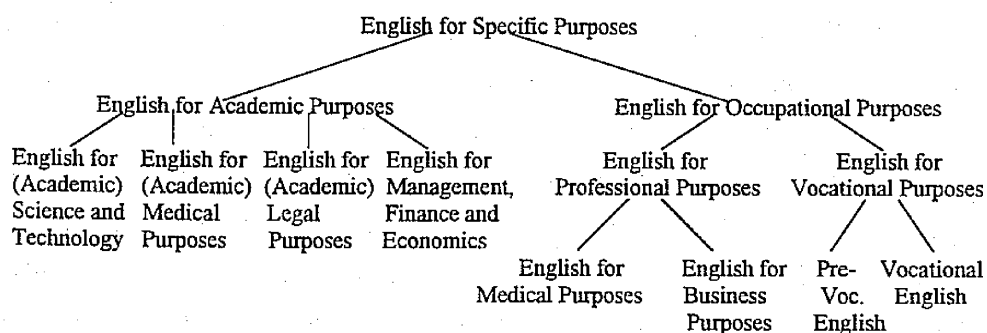
In order to make appropriate decisions regarding opposing views presented in the literature, it is necessary to critically analyze the situation and to use other case studies of similar situations. To illustrate the value of this type of analysis, this paper focuses on the ongoing debate in English for Specific Purposes as to whether we should be teaching English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) or English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) in the university setting. First of all, the major debate in the teaching of ESL regarding whether it is appropriate to teach English that is related to specific disciplines or English that is general in nature imparting basic academic skills to our students which will be transferable to other majors will be highlighted. Then, the skills that are identified through a needs analysis for the development of a Business English class at a major research institution in the United States will be analyzed. This analysis will support the argument that while EGAP skills may very well be necessary in the first two years of undergraduate work when a liberal arts education is the focus, ESAP classes are needed at the upper undergraduate level and the graduate levels and that we as ESL teachers can and should be teaching these classes.

2. ESAP VS. EGAP

English for Specific Purposes has been reflected in tertiary education by the development of courses in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) with the realization that students require special skills for academic success. As Hess and Ghawi (1997) point out, a number of specific skills that include synthesizing numerous sources,

critically analyzing materials, and using various rhetorical modes for writing are necessary skills for students to master in all academic fields. The rationale for this ESP approach is explained in terms of differences between everyday conversational language and academic language which is conceptualized in Cummins' (1989, cited in Hess and Ghawi, 1997) proficiency model, but, for some, with this all encompassing umbrella term it does not seem adequate to describe the varying linguistic needs of students from such diverse fields as medicine, law, art, business, engineering and physical education. For example, an MBA student needs to understand a direct writing style, and to analyze case write-ups along with the ability to incorporate the correct formatting for various types of writing such as an executive summary or memorandum. For this reason, this paper distinguishes between English for Specific Academic Purposes rather than English for General Academic Purposes as Blue (1988) has done. Figure 1 below taken from Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) provides a clear view of the division from a "specific" viewpoint.

Figure 1.



In an effort to address the reality that students face with respect to the field specific English needs, a number of researchers in the L2 world, most notably Swales (1987), have focused on genre analysis in specific fields in an attempt to identify specific teachable aspects of field specific language/writing. Both a collaborative model (Coffey, 1984, p. 9), in which a content instructor and a language instructor would team-teach a class, and an "Adjunct Model" (Shih, 1986, p. 640), in which the language teacher follows the same format as the content course with some cooperation from the content instructor, have been proposed and implemented in some cases. Obviously, an effective alternative to the two models mentioned above

would be to have an ESP instructor trained in both language teaching and the specific field the ESP course is focusing on. As a matter of fact, Spack (1988) attributes much of Swales' success in teaching ESAP to students of technology and science to the very fact that he could consider himself an expert since he has spent so much time doing research in that area.

2.1 Pro - ESAP arguments

Those in favor of the ESAP approach to teaching have found distinct benefits to this type of approach. Strevens (1988 quoted in Dudley-Evans and St. John, 2000) identifies four specific advantages that are related to an ESAP approach.

- 1) Being focused on the learner's needs, an ESAP approach wastes no time.
- 2) An ESAP class is relevant to the learner; therefore, it increases the motivation level.
- 3) It is successful in imparting learning.
- 4) It is more cost effective than 'General English'.

2.2 Pro - EGAP arguments

While Spack (1988) does not argue the advantages of an ESAP approach, she points out the three models mentioned above are not easy to achieve. There is often resistance from content course professors who are busy with their own pressing matters such as research, advising and committee work, thus, limiting the amount of time that they are willing to commit to either advise, as the Adjunct model suggests, or plan with a language specialist, as is stated in the collaborative model. Also, finding a person skilled in both ESL teaching and a specific content area is difficult. If none of these models is possible, Spack believes that it is unrealistic for an ESL teacher to teach English directed at a specific field for the following reasons:

- 1) Language and content are not easily separable; therefore, we cannot teach the language without being experts in the content also.
- 2) There is a base of general academic skills common to all students that the ESL teacher should focus on and that can be transferred to field specific courses.
- 3) The teaching of English skills needed in a specific field should be the responsibility of the content professors.

2.3 The debate and compromise

However, the question remains as to whether we, as language teachers, are adequately preparing the students with the skills that they will need to address the requirements in their content courses? While students need the basics of syntactical and lexical accuracy, the proper usage of source materials, and an understanding of various genres, some argue that they also need practice with the specific types of tasks they will be facing in their specific fields of study. This view is supported by Purves' (1986, p. 39) observation that part of instruction in any discipline is acculturation to the field specific norms, expectations and conventions. Rodrigues (1985, p 26-27, cited in Horowitz, 1986) further supports this by stating, "... [students] need structure, they need models to practice, they need to improve even mechanical skills, and they still need time to think through their ideas, to revise them, and to write for real audiences and real purposes."

This difference of opinion regarding ESAP and EGAP has seemingly led to the movement toward a "sustained content-based teaching" approach (Pally, 2000) which would include ESAP, but the content of which is more commonly based on a subject area that is common to and of interest to the students and that the instructor is comfortable in teaching. In this way, the students can realize many of the benefits of a field specific ESAP approach such as the recycling of vocabulary. This seems like a reasonable approach to classes with students from a mixture of fields in their first two years of post secondary education since they are required to take classes from various fields as part of their liberal arts training. This would then supply them with the necessary general skills, such as reading skill (skimming, paraphrasing), note-taking, test-taking. However, such an approach may be a disservice to the third and fourth year undergraduate or graduate students who are specializing in a specific field. Much of the research in ESL writing (Leki and Carson, 1994, 1997; Pally, 2000) is focused on first year undergraduates and, therefore, does not adequately describe the needs of the upper level students.

By focusing strictly on content material that the teacher is comfortable with teaching and following a "standard" academic writing style, we may be imparting certain academic knowledge beneficial to all students, but we are not necessarily covering some equally pertinent areas that directly pertain to the students' needs. By analyzing the specific skill areas identified in the needs analyses, this paper will support the arguments for ESAP while also highlighting the fact that the most

important aspects that students need to learn are not the technical vocabulary and content, but the more fundamental sub-technical language that emphasizes the pragmatic elements of the communication event.

3. CASE STUDY

3.1. Background

This case study took place at a large research university in the United States with a student population of over 30,000 students at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. In certain fields within this university, there are high concentrations of foreign students in specific departments, such as engineering, computing, business and medicine. The Master of Business Administration program in 1997, when this study was conducted, consisted of 298 students in both the first and second years. Of these 48%, or 143 students were non-native speakers (NNS).

All incoming NNS who did not achieve 613 or higher on the TOEFL test were required to take the English Placement Test (EPT). Depending upon the results from this test, students were placed in either a lower level class which required the students to take another semester of English or a higher level class which would serve as their only English requirement if they passed the class. Also, depending upon the speaking portion of the test, students were placed into a pronunciation class. Of course, if the students' scores were high enough, they could receive exemption from one, two or all of the English requirements. Based on the in-house EPT, approximately a third of the MBA students were required to take English classes from the service courses. These courses were mainly focused on academic writing, more specifically being able to write a research paper; however, they involved all of the skills because of the communicative task-based approach of the program.

The mixture of students from various fields that typically made up an EAP class had always been a source of consternation for the teachers who teach EAP classes. At this university up until the time of this study, the vast majority of the students were randomly assigned to ESL classes that were mostly focused on academic writing skills; however, all of the skills were incorporated into a modified sustained content based instruction framework using a task based approach. The class was typically divided into three separate theme-based units, each inclusive of itself, the end product of which was usually an essay. In an effort to focus more on the students' interests and needs, a 7-10 page research paper on a field specific topic was

the final project for the class. Because the final projects produced by the students were often of such a technical nature, the teacher was unable to understand the content of the paper let alone try to grade it.

Two important factors influenced the decision to work towards an ESAP curriculum. First of all, the department had this as a priority because the people in power felt that this was the most effective method. This was partly in response to the problems mentioned above. For a variety of reasons which relate to constraints limiting innovations (Kennedy 1988; Markee, 1997; Enslen, 2001) even though the mandate for change was in place prior to this point in time, change never happened. The second factor was a revolt by the MBA students in the form of a petition (see Appendix 1) to their department. In this petition, the students stated that there was a mismatch between the focus in the EGAP classes and the English skills that they needed to effectively perform in the MBA program.

The implications of this background information are important to note prior to undertaking a needs analysis of the situation. First of all, there must be a sufficient number of students from a specific field that are required to take English courses or ESAP is not economically or practically feasible. Secondly, while the literature often focuses on the idea of whether we should or should not be initiating ESAP courses, this often is not an option we are in control of as individual teachers. We are either entering programs where an ESAP situation is in place or changes are taking place where the teachers must implement decisions that others in power decide upon, as is the case here. Lastly, the students themselves perceive that their needs are not being addressed or met by the EGAP classes which accounted for the high dropout rate and in the end the student revolt. This result should not be surprising with graduate students who are focusing on a specific field of study, since as Leki and Carson (1994, p.3) have shown that even a number of undergraduate students (13%) studying in their more broadly based curriculum felt a need for more major relevant assignments.

3.2 Needs Analysis

Although the student petition gave some insight to the perceived needs of the students, to fully understand the needs of the MBA students needs analyses were conducted on three levels:

- 1) A student focus group of seven international MBA students along with the MBA Communications professor was formed and interviewed by a member of the Department of English as and International Language.
- 2) Interviews were conducted with the professors of the Marketing and Management courses since their courses were viewed by the students as the most language intensive.
- 3) Assignments from their integrated curriculum were analyzed.

Through these three instruments of evaluation, it was determined that presentation/interviewing skills, negotiation skills and business writing were the main themes across all three needs analyses. By analyzing each of these components to determine what specific skills to address in the classroom, one can evaluate the arguments for and against ESAP which were presented earlier. While every situation may require different skills, even in Business English classes, the process of analysis should enlighten the decision makers regarding which path to follow, ESAP or EGAP.

4. RESULTS OF THE NEEDS ANALYSIS

4.1 Interviewing Skills

Based on the number of books devoted to succeeding at interviewing, one might infer that the interviewing situation is an atypical situation since even native speakers of English need coaching in order to do well. Chew (1997) highlights this idea by stating, "... [There is] the tendency of the IR [interviewer] to withdraw into ambiguity and unspecific interrogations thereby constructing a discourse which is the 'invisible' gate through which only the initiated will pass" (p. 402). Because of this ambiguity in the job interview, it is necessary to teach the underlying meaning of the questions to the job interviewee so that the students can recognize the communicative purpose.

To highlight the difference in the surface and underlying questions that lead to ambiguity, Table 1 lists the questions types and provides examples of the questions.

Table 1.

Question Type	Example
"Probe and confirmation"	"How do you find working at . . . ?" (Chew, 1997, p. 399)
"Challenge"	"So you didn't complete the course?" (p. 399)
"Dismissal"	"Are there any questions you'd like to ask us" (p. 400)
Analytical	"Why are manhole covers round?"

Regarding the "probe and confirmation" type questions, the interviewer is looking for expansion and explanation, not just a direct answer to the specific question presented. If this expansion is not forthcoming from the candidate, the interviewer is left with a negative image. For "challenge" questions, these are often in the form of declarative statements. The uninitiated may not even realize that they are supposed to respond to and argue against these types of questions. "Dismissal" questions indicate an ending of the interview. If the interviewee were to continue asking question past the required two or three obligatory questions, the interviewer would possibly question the social skills or the sensitivity of the candidate. The last question type, i.e. analytical type questions, is becoming popular today and for the uninitiated may seem rather bizarre, but being able to show ones analytical ability by answering these types of questions is often crucial to getting the job.

This analysis of interviewing questions shows the need to initiate the second language learner into the communicative purposes of the interviewing situation by helping them to understand the underlying meanings and pragmatic elements of the communication. Along with general presentation skills, this is where much of the focus for this segment of the class was placed. As one can see, the language itself is not technical, but rather it has specific meanings within this context that must be taught to the students. This, therefore, does not correspond with the arguments that we must be content specialists to teach these skills.

4.2 Negotiation Skills

Similar to the situation found with interviewing skills, understanding strategies to promote the negotiation situation itself rather than understanding the items that are being negotiated seem to play a key role in the success of the negotiation. As Lampi (1993) has found through discourse analysis of actual business negotiations, an important aspect of negotiation is the power one holds in the negotiation process. She

points out that the most powerful party in a negotiation will be the one who initiates and takes up offered topics which leads to the overall organization of the discourse.

In another research study, Lampi (1987) states, "... a negotiation event cannot be taken as one homogeneous activity. It must be broken up into its constituents and the language of the various phases and their different features studied separately" (p. 9). These linguistic features or speech acts that Lampi identifies includes the absence of threats, demands and negative effect acts; persuasion through the use of statistics, examples and analogies; and speech acts contributing to the negotiation climate (mitigation, emphasis, address). To exemplify these strategies that Lampi determined as specific to negotiation, taking a look at some of the published materials in this area may help. For example, O'Connor, Pilbeam, & Scott-Barrett (1992) show that using qualifying statements such as "My immediate feeling is . . .", and "I feel . . ." reduce the negative effect of statements and helps to promote discussion. Clearly, example 2 with the qualifying statements carries less negative.

1. Example without a qualifying statement

This will not address the needs of our company.

2. Example with a qualifying statement

My immediate feeling is that this will not address the needs of our company.

By helping students to become aware of the pragmatic meanings underlying the words they chose for negotiating, the teacher is helping to develop skills that will apply to any topic of discussion. Again, this is clearly a case where the language that needs to be managed is not technical business language.

4.3 Business Writing Skills

As for writing skills, the main point of contention brought up in the student's petition for change, a comparison between the assignments in the English for Academic Purposes class and the English for Academic purposes provides a useful differentiation between the skills. By analyzing the assignments that the students were required to submit for their MBA courses, the researcher determined four main categories: Short formal business reports, short memos (informal reports), case study write-ups and executive summaries. The very fact that the formatting of each one of these writing styles is much different than the other might be justification enough to condone an ESAP class. However, there are other distinctions that make the teaching

of these genres a necessity. For example, while a formal business report may seem similar to the academic essay or research report on the surface, there are basic differences that reinforce the need for these skills to be taught separately. As Lamb (1998) points out, a formal report is most often written in an indirect style with a statement of the problem, the facts, analysis of the situation, present conclusions and then give recommendations. The information presented must be given must be both comprehensive and objective in tone which is a clear contradiction between the thesis statement in the academic essay where the writer is stating his opinion in the controlling idea .

With such a variety of formats and organizational styles within the business discipline, it is necessary to “acculturate” (Purves, 1986) the students to these as mentioned earlier. Also given the fact that the academic essay and the various forms of business writing differ vastly is further support for an ESAP curriculum.

5. DISCUSSION

The above examples are used to highlight the differences between the needs of the MBA students and the skills being taught in the English for Academic Purposes class to show that EAP classes are not meeting the current needs of some specific content fields, in this case business. While it is important to understand that there is a difference in skills between what EGAP is teaching and the needs of some specific students, the question is not if there is a difference but whether the skills taught in the EAP classes are transferring to the content classes in which the students must write. Although many researchers attest to circumstantial evidence with regard to students’ perceptions of the transferability of EGAP skills to their specific content needs, the evidence provided through this case study would suggest otherwise.

After determining that the students have needs that are not being met in the EAP classes, we need to determine if ESL teachers should be focusing on those specific needs. Leki and Carson (1997) go so far as to state, “. . . the question of teaching disciplinary forms is irrelevant; if the forms are needed, the disciplines appear to be teaching them” (p. 63). This statement may be based on their findings that content was the only important aspect for the students’ professors and the writing conventions and language forms themselves were not. However, this seems like a hasty generalization and is not supported by the findings in this case study. Even if content professors do not care about anything other than content, this is not the only

audience these students will be writing for in the future. Accuracy, format and mechanics in writing are important outside of academia and should not be overlooked because certain academics do not focus on them.

Finally, upon understanding that there are skills that need to be address, we need to focus on the question of whether we, as ESL teachers, are up to the task. The brief analysis of the skills identified in this case study should provide, at least, initial evidence in the case of ESP that teachers are capable. Much of what needs to be taught is not technical language but rather the common language needed to correctly function in certain business specific situations. While technical language will invariably come into play, it is not necessarily the most important aspect or an aspect that we should be worried about as ESL teachers. As Steinhauer (1993) indicates, when the students are more knowledgeable than the teacher on a topic, it can have a positive motivational effect because it brings the power relationship closer to an equilibrium. It also allows the teacher to move away from unauthentic display questions to authentic questions regarding the content of a student's paper.

6. CONCLUSION

As teachers and administrators are faced with a myriad of decisions regarding approaches to teaching, it is important to remember that change must be judged objectively rather than following along with the current fad in teaching. We are often led to believe that change is good, but in actuality, it is only good when it is well thought out. By critically analyzing a proposed change in the curriculum through a needs analysis and, in turn, analyzing those needs, one can determine if the skills are effectively being taught through the current approach that is in place or if there is justification for change.

In the case study presented, the arguments that ESL teachers need to be experts in the content to teach ESAP and that content specific skills are taught by the content professors do not seem to hold true. Also, the idea that EGAP skills will be transferable to the ESAP context also seems faulty in view of the fact that much of what needs to be taught are organizational, pragmatic and mechanical skills specific to the context.

References

- Blue, G. (1988). Individualizing academic writing tuition. In P. Robinson (Ed.) *Academic writing: Process and product. ELT Documents* 129.
- Chew, P. G. (1997). Generic power at the gate. *World Englishes* 16, 395-405.
- Coffey, B. (1984). ESP-English for specific purposes. *Language Teaching: The International Abstracting Journal for Language Teachers and Applied Linguists*, 17, 2-16.
- Cummins, J. (1989). *Empowering Minority Students*. Sacramento, CA: Association of Bilingual Education.
- Dudley-Evans, T., & St. John, M. J. (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Enslin, T. (2001). Addressing curricular innovation in a multi-stakeholder environment: Planning to change. *Working Papers on Language Acquisition and Education: International University of Japan*, 11, 42-55.
- Hess, N., & Ghawi, M. (1997). English for Academic Purposes: Teacher development in a demanding arena. *English for Specific Purposes* 16, 15-26.
- Horowitz, D. M. (1986). What professors actually require: Academic tasks for the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20, 445-462.
- Kennedy, C. (1988). Evaluation of the management of change in ELT projects. *Applied Linguistics*, 9, 329-42.
- Lamb, S. E. (1998). *How to write it: A complete guide to everything you'll ever write*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press.
- Lampi, M. (1987). The language of negotiation strategy. In P. Silcock (Ed.) *Language learning in business education*. Conference proceedings (pp. 281-294). Barcelona: ESADE.
- Lampi, M. (1993). Discourse organization and power: Towards a pragmatics of sales negotiations. *Pragmatics and Language Learning Monograph Series*, 4, 195-207.
- Leki, I., & Carson, J. G. (1994). Students' perceptions of EAP writing instruction and writing needs across the disciplines. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28, 81-100.
- Leki, I., & Carson, J. G. (1997). "Completely different worlds": EAP and the writing experiences of ESL students in university courses. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 39-68.

- Markee, N. (1997). *Managing Curricular Innovation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Connor, P., Pilbeam, A., & Scott-Barret, F. (1992). *Negotiating*. Hong Kong: Longman.
- Pally, M. (2000). Sustaining interest/advancing learning: Sustained content-based instruction in ESL/EFL – theoretical background and rationale. In Pally, *Sustained content teaching in Academic ESL/EFL*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1-18.
- Purves, A. C. (1986). Rhetorical communities, the international student and basic writing. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 5, 38-51.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (1986). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rodrigues, R. J. (1985). Moving away from writing-process worship. *English Journal*, 74, 24-27.
- Rogers, E. (1995) *The Diffusion of Innovations*, 4th ed. London: Macmillan.
- Shih, M. (1986). Content-based approaches to teaching academic writing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20, 617-648.
- Spack, R. (1988). Initiating ESL students into the academic discourse community: How far should we go? *TESOL Quarterly*, 22, 29-50.
- Steinhausen, P. (1993, April). *From General English to ESP: Bridging the gap*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Language Center Seminar, Singapore.
- Stevens, P. (1988). ESP after twenty years: A re-appraisal. In M. Tickoo (Ed.) *ESP: State of the Art*. Singapore SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.
- Swales, J. M. (1987). Utilizing the literatures in teaching the research paper. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21, 41-68.

Appendix 1

November 19, 1996

MBA Program

410 David Kinley Hall

1407 West Gregory Drive

Urbana, IL 61801

Attn.: MBA Assistant Dean

MBA Director of Student Services

MBA Communications Center Director

This letter is to present you a main issue concerning most of the first year international students. Every student with a TOEFL score below 607 is required to take the English Placement Test (EPT) given by the University. According to the results of this test, nearly all those students are required to take one or more English courses. These courses are mandatory, but can be taken in any semester during the MBA. The objective of these courses is to provide the student with the necessary knowledge to write a thesis and perhaps publish some research paper.

We have attached a copy of the syllabus from one of these courses, in which it is evident that the course does not follow the same direction of our core studies – business. During the current semester, some of us attended one of the courses (ESL 401) but many of us dropped it for the following reasons:

- The course is oriented to students who will write a thesis or research papers during their graduate studies.
- The course does not cover the skills tested in the TOEFL and/or the EPT.
- The course is not focused in the English skills an MBA students should have.
- The additional workload distract some of our efforts from BUS 401.

Our needs as MBA students are totally different. We will neither write a thesis nor publish papers. If we are required to take an English course, it should be tailored to

our needs. A course focused in useful topics such as: writing business letters and English grammar (the ESL 401 does not include anything about English grammar) would improve our performance in the MBA program rather than consume our time (the ESL 401 requires attendance to 2-full-hour sessions per week –4 hours in total- and we are to write papers as long as 5 to 7 pages for some sessions). Furthermore, some international students who are not required to take any of these courses are interested on taking the English course we are asking for.

The English course, as it is right now, is time-consuming in areas and skills that are not related with our business fields. Therefore, we strongly believe that a course designed specially for us is a very feasible request. The two main issues this course should cover are:

- It should be oriented to oral and written Business Communication.
- It should include English grammar and pronunciation skills.

The new course can be taught by either ESL faculty (rather than ESL TAs) or staff from the Communication Center. We consider that the ESL faculty are better prepared to teach grammar and pronunciation, while the faculty from the Communication Center have the expertise to teach business related issues.

Based upon the high percentage of international students who are required to attend these courses, we believe that there should be a way to solve this situation and provide a more beneficial English training for the international students. This would definitively enhance the entire MBA Program.

Thank you in advance for considering our proposal and listening to our needs. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

The signing international students.

Note: The addressees' names have been omitted and the accompanying page with 65 signatures from the international students has not been included.