



## DESIGNING AN ESP (ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES) PROJECT FOR FLIGHT ATTENDANTS IN AVIATION IN UZBEKISTAN

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ESP, needs analysis, aviation English, flight attendant, syllabus, authentic materials.

### ANNOTATION

This article discusses the development of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program designed for pre-service flight attendants in Uzbekistan. The goal of this project is to help learners develop their communicative knowledge within the context of the aviation profession, with an emphasis on speaking and listening skills which are necessary to do the role of a steward or stewardess. A needs analysis was completed using both questionnaire surveys and in-flight observations which were recommended, so there would be an understanding of the learners' linguistic and job needs. The course framework in this study is tied to a functional-notional syllabus which emphasizes the use of practical functions of language such as greeting passengers, making announcements, responding to emergencies and writing incident reports. Authentic material was used as functional examples of real-life communication in the form of video recordings, dialogues and the textbook English for Cabin Crew by Sue Ellis. Various formative and summative assessments such as role-plays, emergency announcements convention and a mock interview were used to assess learner development. This article identifies the need to align language teaching with the professional needs of the learners and illustrates how ESP pedagogy can spot the difference between learning in the classroom with actual communication needs in the workplace within the aviation context.

**Introduction.** Designing a course for Aviation English for Stewards/Stewardesses has become on demand because in Uzbekistan this kind of course has never been designed for learners with this need. English has already become the dominant language in many fields, including aviation. Therefore, the course design for this course is observed as an example in a group of seven students who asked ESP practitioners to organize a course to prepare them for the position of a steward and a stewardess in Uzbekistan Airways.

In every three months, interview tests are taken place for the position. Candidates should be trained with aviation language skills before the interview test. Only those who have good English communication, at least C1 level of speaking skills in the field of aviation, are selected. Their general English proficiency level must not be less than B2.

A placement test was organized to get to know their general proficiency level of English. To start this course, the minimum level of students must be at B2 as in three months, upgrading communication skills to C1 in an aviation field would be realistic. Five of them have been selected to start off this course, considering the required level for the course. The course lasts for three months, and classes will be conducted one and a half hour, two times a week. Within this period, possible expectation is to upgrade students' speaking and writing skills to C1 level.

#### Course Aims

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Greet passengers with polite tone and guide them with clear instructions;
- Explain safety procedures during before-flight, in-flight, and landing situations with clear instructions;
- Respond to the passengers' request using polite language of questions and answers and offering help;
- Deal with complaints by passengers and difficult situations during in-flight by polite language and giving explanations;
- Announce emergency procedures, such as turbulence and bad weather, and plane equipment with clear and appropriate language as well as sequencing words: first, second, then...;
- Write a report explaining in-flight situations using formal language.

**Literature review.** According to Lindy Woodrow, ESP is an approach to course design in which teachers (practitioners) teach a target group of learners with common goals or purposes in learning English<sup>1</sup>. To be more specific, ESP is to learn English for a specific job, a study area, or a goal. To design this ESP project, a model has been chosen as a base to organize the sequence and framework of the course.

Selected ESP Course Example(s). As a base for the course, "Cross-Cultural Nursing" by Susan Bosher in Woodrow's book was chosen and it can be a supportive model and justification is provided for why it would be an ideal base for Aviation English below:

First, just like steward/stewardess - passenger interaction in aviation, nursing also requires nurse - patient communication. This is very similar in a way that one has a need and the other is provider. So, teaching methods in nursing can be included in aviation context as well.

Second, both courses are alike in terms of the lengths: aviation English course lasts for three months (three times a week) and Cross-Cultural Nursing is three and a half months (three times a week), which means that they demand the same amount of time to be successful in the field of study. In this case, creating a curriculum for aviation can be supported with nursing course.

Third, aviation and nursing require both technical knowledge such as emergency, field terms, formal communication and soft skills such as calming, expressing empathy, which means that in cases of limited teaching materials, resources may be adapted from the nursing course.

Finally, they both have teaching methodologies in common. Aviation and nursing can include real life role-plays, emergency situation readiness, and polite expressions towards passengers and patients, which are all very similar in both contexts. The course design revolves around the alternative project by Přivorová's Developing a course for Aviation English.<sup>2</sup>

**Methodology.** In the Aviation English for Stewards/Stewardesses course, there are five learners: two males and three females. Their ages are between 20 and 25, as the minimum age requirement for aviation employment is 20 years old. So far, they have learned General English and their current language proficiency levels are at B2 level according to CEFR framework. During the course, our focus is mainly on improving speaking and listening skills because within three-months period, we must upgrade communication skills up to C1 level. The Uzbekistan

<sup>1</sup> Woodrow, L. (2018). Introducing course design in English for specific purposes.

<sup>2</sup> Přivorová, B. (2016). *ESP - Developing a course for Aviation English*. Charles University in Prague.

Airways has C1 requirement for speaking skills. For the time being, their writing and reading skills seem to be a bit stronger because they read a lot of academic articles and wrote essays in English.

These learners' purpose is to get a steward/stewardess position in aviation industry, in which they will be hoped to communicate well with people from other countries and the crew. Although they had less exposure to aviation English communication, as they get on a plane several times, their motivation to learn the language is high enough towards their professional goals. They deeply understand the importance of the effective communication in the workplace to ensure the people they are going to serve feel comfort and this way they can secure their loving positions.

The study was conducted in two ways:

- In-flight experience
- Questionnaire

For in-flight experience, a request would be submitted to Uzbekistan Airways to give one free flight to a shorter distance to show course participants the real communication in aviation. It is said that they can offer this for one flight for those who are preparing for the position in cabin crew. During the flight, participants can find out the how stewards/stewardesses deal with different situations such as emergency, handling problems with passengers, announcing weather conditions, and serving. Based on these experiences, the course syllabus will be designed which can cater to the needs of my learners.

As of the questionnaire, it will be prepared for the participants, regarding their interests, current language abilities, and readiness for the job. This will help practitioners to discover what my students are capable of now and consider what they will be after finishing the course. The question may be like "Are you comfortable with announcing boarding, emergency situations, and safety measures?" Then, expectations will be precise.

**Approach to Course Design.** For the Aviation English for Steward/Stewardess course, functional-notional approach suits best considering the fact that participants use functional language in their workplace. This, in turn, aligns with their communicative needs because in the workplace they are required to perform their communicative competence most. This course's design is built around the functional-notional syllabus which Nunan says that this means that the focus will be on satisfying communicative purposes of learners rather than just grammar<sup>3</sup> (Table 1. Syllabus design). Finocchiaro and Brumfit confirm that functional-notional syllabus puts the learners' needs and communicative purposes at the center of the curriculum<sup>4</sup>. This is very useful for the workplace where my students intended to work.

Needs analysis carried out by the practitioners with professionals and participants will be an incentive to outline the syllabus for the course. Through it, they will outline the syllabus for three months (twice-a-week lessons) period. Students needs are also directly linked to language functions and notions, as mentioned previously: greeting, directing passengers, explaining safety measures, and making announcements. Based on those, course has its aims to achieve within this three-months period.

**Results.** Assessment Plan: In terms of assessment methods, in Uzbekistan, there is no specified standard tests for hiring stewards/stewardesses. It is taken place via multiple stage situational interviews. To be more specific, candidates should pass several structured interviews like STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) format, personality questions, and situational scenarios. These assessment methods help with evaluating candidates' communication and problem-solving skills. Fewler at al. says that these oral structured interviews in aviation English recruitment enable raters measure the communicative skills, especially in emergency scenarios<sup>5</sup>. Considering all these, a mock summative interview will be assigned for the students at the end of the course. The interviewer will be the instructor familiar with the aviation interview process. Since there is no a specific scoring system for the interview, practitioners will assess the candidates based on their performance. Specific situation and factual questions will be used, role plays, and polite tone assessments in the test.

Also, Formative assessments are being considered every third week (overall three formative assessments) for the course as it lasts for three months. Throughout this period, students' progress should

be monitored, and they should get feedback for further improvement on interaction quality, listening comprehension and clarity, and customer service politeness. Here are the considerations for formative assessment plan:

- Role-play (groupwork): they prepare real life conversation with passengers.
- Emergency situation announcing (individual): they prepare a speech for different emergency cases and announce.
- Cultural communication (pair work): students prepare dialogue of different culture members and demonstrate how they carry out the interaction.

**Course Materials.** The primary purpose of the course is to improve the communicative competence of the participants in the field of aviation. To support this, a textbook, authentic materials, videos, dialogues from real situations, and online materials will be implemented. Instructor-prepared presentations are also provided for each lesson to demonstrate. Considering the fact that stewards/stewardesses used functional language in the workplace, the materials are chosen based on these factors to improve their communication to function. Below are the samples from the materials which are planned to be used:

**A textbook "English for Cabin Crew" by Sue Ellis**



**Talking to flight attendant Audio and Transcript**

(<https://www.eslfast.com/robot/topics/travel/travel13.htm>)

A: Can I ask you some questions about the in-flight instructions?

B: I would be happy to help you clarify anything you need help with.

A: Could you help me find out where my nearest exit is?

B: There is a card in your seat pocket that shows you where your nearest exit is. Yours is two rows in front of you.

A: Where is my oxygen mask that you were talking about?

B: Your oxygen mask is above you, next to the reading light. It will drop down when you need it.

A: I am concerned about landing in the water.

B: The life jackets are under your seat. You can also use your seat cushion as a flotation device.

A: What is the most important thing we can do to stay safe?

B: The most important thing you can do is keep your seatbelt fastened when the captain asks you to.

<sup>3</sup> Nunan, D. (1998). *Syllabus design*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Finocchiaro, M., & Brumfit, C. (1983). *The functional-notional approach: From theory to practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Fowler, R., Matthews, E., Lynch, J., & Roberts, J. (2021). Aviation English assessment and training. *Collegiate Aviation Review International*, 39(2). <https://doi.org/10.22488/okstate.22.100231>

In-flight safety demonstration video (<https://youtu.be/AtMzmeYdx4s?si=XeZF6THw-6O9wvH>)



Aviation English quiz

(<https://wavground.com/admin/quiz/651fceb377a7a5a7e545298e/aviation-english-quiz>)

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10 questions Show all answers

1. MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTION 30 sec • 1 pt  
**What is the purpose of aviation English?**

- To improve flight safety.
- To teach pilots how to fly airplanes.
- To design aircrafts for the aviation industry.
- To ensure effective communication in the aviation industry.

2. MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTION 30 sec • 1 pt  
**What does the term 'squawk' mean in aviation terminology?**

- Altitude measurement
- Flight plan

Table 1. Syllabus for Aviation English for Steward/Stewardess Course

Weeks	Aviation Domains	Language Functions	Language Content	Vocabulary	Assessment
Week 1	Introduction to the course & Greetings	Introducing yourself to others Asking names	Present simple: To be Question forms	General Aviation Vocabulary	
Week 2	Giving Basic Instructions	Giving orders using imperatives Using sequencing words to explain the process	Imperative sentences Sequencing words	Action verbs First, Next, After that, Then...	
Week 3	Requesting	Keeping polite tone of language Using modals appropriately	Modal verbs Semi-modals	Can, could, may Have to, need, would	<b>Formative Assessment 1: Boarding Instructions and Making requests</b>
Week 4	Offers and Refuses	Offering a help How to refuse a request politely	Modal verbs 2 Negative forms	Polite phrases	
Week 5	Problems with Passenger's Behavior	Describing the situation Apologizing	Present simple Present continuous	Unethical behavior	
Week 6	Explanation to a	Clarifying the past situation	Past simple	Reasons	<b>Formative</b>

	<b>problem</b>	<i>Being holistic</i>	<i>Passive voice</i>		<b>Assessment 2: Role Play - Problems and Solutions</b>
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Description of Tools and Equipment</b>	<i>How to describe tools and equipment</i>	<i>Adjectives Passive voice 2</i>	<i>Tools and Equipment</i>	
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Emergency Situations</b>	<i>Making announcements</i>	<i>Imperatives 2</i>	<i>Weather conditions</i>	
		<i>Using "calming" language</i>	<i>Yes-No questions?</i>	<i>Health problems</i>	
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Description of</b>	<i>Using conjunctions</i>	<i>Conjunctions</i>	<i>Descriptive adjectives</i>	<b>Formative</b>
	<b>Processes and Situations</b>	<i>appropriately Explaining cause and effect</i>	<i>Future simple</i>		<b>Assessment 2: Role Play - Emergency Situations Announcements</b>
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Report Writing</b>	<i>Writing a well-structured reports</i> <i>Keeping formal tone of language</i>	<i>Sentence starters</i> <i>Reported speech</i>	<i>Incidents vocabulary</i>	
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Review</b>	<i>Writing a reflection</i>	<i>revision</i>	<i>revision</i>	
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>Final exam</b>	<i>Performing a situational task</i>			<b>Summative Assessment: Job Interview</b>

**Discussion.** During the development of the ESP course of Aviation English for stewards/stewardess, practitioners' experience has been really meaningful and eye opening. Before this course, several students who wanted to go to Dubai in search of job opportunities were taught in their experience. At that time, taking some random materials from the internet and teaching speaking and vocabulary by the help of them were quite common. But, throughout the ESP course and designing an ESP project, they came to know that ESP is not only teaching the target language, but also linking it to the specific needs of the learners by integrating real-life language, leaving boring general English textbooks behind.

One of the most important aspects learned from this course has been Needs Analysis for the ESP course project. Till this time, they were not even aware of conducting needs analysis to discover learners' necessities in learning the language. As previously mentioned, many teachers would select materials and themes according to general English topics, but now they realize that in ESP everything should be designed considering what learners need to perform in their target situations. This is why this course design has been eye opening for them.

Another important aspect learned is implementing authentic materials in the course. Many teachers, including myself, mostly go for textbooks to teach. However, we came to know that we are supposed to use materials which demonstrate real world language learners will use in their professions.

Also, some skills were acquired during the project, one of which is syllabus designing. Professors with good experience taught syllabus design types and how they work. For, example, A task-based syllabus had initially been considered, it requires a clear outcome of the task. For this situation, functional-notional syllabus type suited best because in aviation stewards/stewardesses perform functions such as announcing, dealing with passengers,

guiding etc. Therefore, the syllabus was designed based on functions and notions.

Last but not least, this ESP project enlightened all about looking at the course from both teacher's and learner's perspective. Because deciding on the course content is a negotiation process involving both teacher and participants. The practitioners should plan the course which will cater to the needs of learners, and as a learner, we should take difficulties into account and feel motivated towards learning, not just for needs but for wants as well. After this course, it can be stated that a higher degree of professional ability in ESP course design had been developed.

**Conclusion.** In a nutshell, the Aviation English course for stewards and stewardesses in Uzbekistan illustrates how language teaching contexts can be specifically developed to meet a specific professional context. The course utilized a functional-notional syllabus to emphasize the communicative purposes of flight attendants perform real life communication, greeting passenger before flight, explaining safety, and responding to safety emergencies. The use of authentic materials, formative and summative assessments, and real-life simulation tasks required that learners develop their linguistic competence and professional confidence.

Additionally, this project addresses the importance of needs analysis in the design of ESP courses, in fact, emphasizing that teaching is effective because it begins with researching learners' wants, needs, and motivation for the workplace. It also signifies and emphasizes the importance of the teacher as a facilitator that bridges what happens during the class time with a real-world context. Finally, this ESP project addresses the perceived lack of professional relevance of Aviation English in Uzbekistan and it is an example of a practical model for designing ESP courses in other professional contexts.

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