



Investigating Difficulties in ESP Teaching and Learning Processes

A Case Study of ESP Learners at Sudanese Universities (2022).

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Abstract

The study aimed at investigate difficulties in ESP teaching and learning process and ensuring the need for modern teaching techniques in ESP courses. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method. The data for the study were collected by means of a questionnaire from twenty five (25) of ESP learners from different Sudanese Universities. Then the data were statistically analyzed. The results indicate that: ESP courses achieve their goals in many areas of science, ESP learning requires good communicators in specialized information, needs analysis enable instructors to distinguish ESP teaching materials, internet method enhances ESP teaching and learning, ESP learning depends on mastering English for general purposes. The study recommendations: ESP Teachers should be trained to use the modern technology in teaching the ESP courses, ESP teaching materials should match the global themes and ESP courses should be designed to match the future changes.

Key Words: ESP teaching, good communicators, English for general purposes.

Introduction

The term specific in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) stand for the specific purpose of learning English (Hans and Hans, 2015). Learning English for specific purposes (ESP), enables learners to use English that they have known before. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) assesses the students/learners' needs and it integrates motivation, subject matter, and content for the teaching of relevant skills. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) the emphasis is on "Specific English" that belongs to any particular discipline, occupation or activity¹. Almost every subject has its own "term" used in the course, such as business, medicine, and various scientific and technical fields. These terms can be both much more complicated and complex. Because English is widespread, it is becoming more and more important to learn English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The most important learner's purpose for learning English is to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform specific job-related functions. English for Specific Purposes (ESP), therefore, built on an assessment of purposes and needs and the functions for which English is required.

The Problem of the Study

Many of ESP learners find it difficult to comprehend ESP discourse successfully. In addition, some teachers do not handle ESP materials effectively in the classroom. Moreover, learning assessment is not always accurate because the majority of exams are designed by the teachers.

Research Objectives: The study aims at:

1. Investigate difficulties in ESP teaching and learning process.
2. Ensuring the effectiveness of using modern technology in ESP teaching.

Research Questions: The study tried to answer the following questions:

- 1.What are the difficulties that face ESP learners or teachers in ESP teaching and learning process?

¹Javid, Choudary. Z. (2013). English for Specific Purposes: Its Definition , Characteristics, Scope and Purpose. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 112(1), 138–151



2. To what extent do teachers use modern techniques for teaching ESP courses ?

The Hypothesis of the Study: The study hypothesizes that :

1. There are some difficulties in teaching and learning ESP courses.
2. Some of ESP teaching methods need to be supported by modern technology.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study investigates the importance and efficiency of ESP teaching and learning. It also discusses the difficulties that face ESP teachers and learners in Sudanese Institutions and suggest the use of modern technology in teaching ESP courses.

2. Literature Review

English for specific purposes (ESP) refers to the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language where the goal of the learners is to use English in a particular domain¹. Moreover,² state that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) more concentrates on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures. It covers subjects varying from accounting or computer science to tourism and business management etc. An important point in ESP that English is not taught as a subject separated from the students' real world, but it is integrated into a subject matter area important to the learners. The fact is English for Specific Purposes (ESP) combines subject matter and English language teaching like a combination is highly motivating because the students/learners can apply what they have learned in their English classes to their field of studies such as in accounting, business, management, economics, computer science, politic or tourism. Being able to use the vocabularies and structures that they have to learn in a meaningful context, it reinforces what is taught and increases their motivation in learning English. The students' abilities in their subject-matter fields, improve their skill to acquire or master English.

Subject-matter knowledge gives the students/learners the context they need to understand English in the classroom. In English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes, the students/learners are shown how the subject-matter content is expressed well in English. The teachers can make the most of the students' knowledge of the subject matter so that it helps them can learn English faster.

³ argue that in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) context, the outcomes of the historical occurrences resulted from a number of people across the globe who wanted to learn the English language due to the key language in the fields of science, technology, and commerce. The emergence of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching movement is caused by the English language needs of the learners for specific purposes in relation to their professions or job description.

2.1 Characteristics of English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

Argues that there are some characteristics of ESP, they are ⁴: (1) ESP meets specific purposes of the learners; (2) ESP uses the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves; (3) ESP is centered and focused on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse, and genre

¹Trimble, L. (1985), English for science and technology: a discorsal approach).Cambridge: Cambridge university press..

²Hans, A., & Hans, E. (2015). A Comparative Study of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English as a Second Language (ESL) Programs.International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL), 3(11), 26-31

³Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). English for Specific Purposes: A Learning International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature

⁴Evans,T. and John, M.St. (1998).Development in English for specificpurposes. Cambridge: Cambridge university press



2.2 ESP Types: identifies three types of ESP: English as a Restricted Language ¹, English for Academic and Occupational Purposes (EAOP), and English with Specific Topics. A discussion of each will be presented in the following.

2.2.1 English as a Restricted Language

Explains that, a restricted language' would not allow the speaker to communicate effectively ² in contexts outside the vocational environment. Language used by air traffic controllers or by waiters are examples of English as a restricted language. Mountford clearly illustrate the difference between restricted language and language with this statement: the language of international air-traffic control could be regarded as 'special', in the sense that the repertoire required by the controller is strictly limited and can be accurately determined situation ally, as might be the linguistic needs of a dining-room waiter or air-hostess. However, such restricted repertoires are not languages, just as a tourist phrase book is not grammar.

2.2.2 English for Academic and Occupational Purposes

Indicates that this English should be at the heart of ESP although he refrains from ³ developing it any further. However, this type of ESP is English for Academic and Occupational Purposes.(Hutchinson and Waters,1987), on the other hand, have developed a "Tree of ELT" in which the subdivisions of ESP are clearly illustrated. ESP is broken down into three branches: English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Business and Economics (EBE), and English Social Studies (ESS). Each of these subject areas is further divided into two branches: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP).

2.2.3 English with Specific Topics

This is the third and final type of ESP. It differs from other types of ESP in the sense that focus shifts from purpose to topic. That is, the focus is on topics that are in agreement with the anticipated future English needs of learners such as scientists requiring English for postgraduate reading studies, attending conferences or working in foreign institutions. It has been argued, however, that this type should not be viewed as a separate type of ESP but rather an integral component of ESP courses or programs with focus on situational language. This situational language has been determined based on the interpretation of results from needs analysis of authentic language used in target workplace settings.

In brief, there are three features common to ESP: (a) authentic materials, (b) purpose-related orientation, and (c) self-direction. These features are indeed useful in attempting to formulate one's own understanding of ESP. ⁴ claim that ESP should be offered at an intermediate or advanced level, one would conclude that the use of authentic learning materials is entirely feasible. The use of authentic content materials, modified or unmodified in form, is indeed a feature of ESP, particularly in self-directed study and research tasks. Purpose-related orientation, on the other hand, refers to the simulation of communicative tasks required of the target setting, for

¹ Carver, D. (1983). Some propositions about ESP. English for Specific Purposes, 2, 131-137.

² Mountford, A., & Mackay, R (Eds.). (1978). English for specific purposes. London: Longman.

³ Carver, D. (1983). Some propositions about ESP. English for Specific Purposes, 2, 131-137.

⁴ Dudley-Evans, T. and John, M. St. (1998). Development in English for specific purposes. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.



example, student simulation of a conference, involving the preparation of papers, reading, note taking, and writing. Finally, self-direction is characteristic of ESP courses in that the point of including self-direction is that ESP is concerned with turning learners into users. In order for self-direction to occur, the learners must have a certain degree of freedom to decide when, what, and how they will study. There must also be a systematic attempt by teachers to teach the learners how to learn by teaching them about learning strategies¹.

2.3 ESP Needs Analysis

The procedures used to collect information about learners' needs are known as "Needs Analysis". Needs analysis (NA) is a formative stage that should be taken into consideration prior to, during, or after a language program. ² defined needs analysis as "techniques and procedures for collecting information to be used in syllabus design". In ESP learners' needs are often described in terms of the outcomes or what the learners will be able to do at the end of a language course ³ states that

"the goal of needs analysis is to collect information that can be used to develop a profile of the language needs of a group of learners in order to be able to make decisions about the goals and content of a language course".

However, ESP teachers need to analyze learners needs for relevant articles, looking for ESP teaching material, contacting colleagues and organizations that might have experience of such groups, reading material about the subject or discipline. It is done in order to learn what they did not know, appear much more professional and find out how to analyze the data

2.4 Problems in ESP Teaching

The primary issue in ESP teaching is the struggle to master language and subject matter. In the majority of cases ESP teachers are not specialists in the students' professional fields. According to ⁴ ESP teachers do not need to learn specialist subject knowledge. They require three things only: a positive attitude towards the ESP content; knowledge of the fundamental principles of the subject area and an awareness of how much they probably already know. However many teachers find themselves having to teach with texts whose content they know little or nothing about. In addition, the ESP teacher happens to be the syllabus designer and is responsible for the teaching material and evaluation. On the other hand the basic problem in designing a topic syllabus is that the ESP syllabus designer is not a specialist in the specific area (e.g. law), consequently he/she is not capable of deciding by himself/herself which topics to include in the syllabus to provide the required terminology. It is also very difficult for him/her to arrange the topics in the most

¹Douglas, D. (2000). Assessing language for specific purposes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

² Nunan D. The Learner-Centered Curriculum. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988. 11

³Richards, J.C. (2001). Curriculum Development in Language Teaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. STUDENTS. Jurnal Education and Economics, 2, 10.

⁴ Kennedy C., Bolitho R. English for Specific Purposes. Macmillan Publisher Ltd. 1990.



suitable order. Care should be taken that the ESP classes do not precede the topics in the special subjects, as the ESP teacher is not a subject specialist, this can lead to misunderstanding. Moreover, if a topic has already been discussed in the special subject, this motivates the learners and gives them confidence to communicate or discuss. Another problem is the text selection and adaptation. Not being a specialist in the specific area, the ESP teacher cannot decide by himself/herself how to adapt the text that the most important information in terms of subject matter will remain. The decision has to be made about the texts: on the one hand, the texts must not be too difficult, because neither the ESP teacher, nor the students have such a high level of professional knowledge; on the other hand, the text must not be too popular, because some learners have some confidence in their professional knowledge, and if the text is too easy for them in terms of subject matter, they tend to underestimate it in terms of language as well. In order to avoid such de-motivation, the text should contain some challenges which can activate the professional knowledge of the students. The lack of close cooperation and coordination between content lecturers and the designers of the study programs, is a problem that still exists. Content lecturers should have more responsibility for introducing students and training them in a particular discipline.

Exploring Future Contact in ESP Language Forms

¹ argues that, ESP has mostly fostered the development of the language skill of reading print-based texts or mono modal specialized texts.” It goes without saying that, in this increasingly digitalized world, the traditional way of getting learners to read textbooks on specialized topics has given way to the multimodal approach where video clips and other resources freely available on the Internet have revolutionized the learning process. Argue that classes need to be multimodal in order to teach students the skills required in the 21st-century work environment². Learning process that incorporates multimodal technology and the Internet as an integral part of a classroom lesson should be taken into account by ESP researchers concerned with identifying what is meant today by “learners’ needs”.³ explains that ESP consists of English language teaching which is designed to meet specified needs of the learner. The opportunity of authoring multimodal texts by coherently integrating different digital media elements (texts, graphics, sound, animation and video) is becoming a popular practice among the net generation. According to multimodality seems to have remained a somewhat peripheral area of ESP research the dominant research questions continue to be questions of language forms in mono modal frames⁴.

2.6 The Use of Technology in ESP settings

Due to considerably changing nature of language from one context to another, i.e. tourism, commerce, engineering, medical, so and so forth, the activities employed and

¹Plastina, Anna F. 2013. “Multimodality in English for Specific Purposes: reconceptualizing meaning-making practices”. *Revista de Linguas para Fines Específicos* 19, 372–396.

²Vaish, Vaniti & Phillip A. Towndrow. 2010. “Multimodal literacy in language classrooms”. In Hornberger, N.H. & S.L. McKay (eds.), *Sociolinguistics and Language Education*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters, 317–349.

³Strevens, P. (1988). ESP after twenty years: A re-appraisal. In M. Tickoo (Ed.), *ESP: State of the Art* (pp. 1-13). Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Centre

⁴Prior, Paul. 2013. “Multimodality and ESP research”. In Paltridge, B. & S. Starfield (eds.), *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 519–534



the materials used in ESP classes in these specific fields should be meticulously chosen through considering learners' needs and wants. Because of the challenge in doing this, ESP teachers tried to integrate technology in their classes and eventually ESP pedagogy was affected by the use of technology ¹ technology provides students with a lot of learning opportunities and advantages ranging from providing interactive and communicative activities related to their professions to tools for giving feedback and self-evaluation on that specific context ².

3.0 The Current Study:

The participants of this study were twenty five (25) ESP learners who were randomly chosen from different Sudanese Universities. A questionnaire was distributed to them for collecting the required data about difficulties that face ESP teaching and learning processes. Then, the collected data was statistically analyzed. The statistical analyses were shown in the following tables.

Material and Method

The Questionnaire Statements

Statement(1) ESP courses achieve their goals in many areas of science.

Statement (2) ESP syllabus matches students' learning needs.

Statement (3) ESP learning requires good communicators in specialized information.

Statement (4) needs analysis enable instructors to distinguish ESP teaching and learning materials.

Statement (5) modern workplace communication requires professionals communicators in any subject area.

Statement (6) internet method enhances ESP teaching and learning.

Statement (7) ESP learning depends on mastering English for general purposes

Data Analysis

Table (1)The study used the SPSS Program for analyzing the questionnaire statements as it is shown below in the following tables

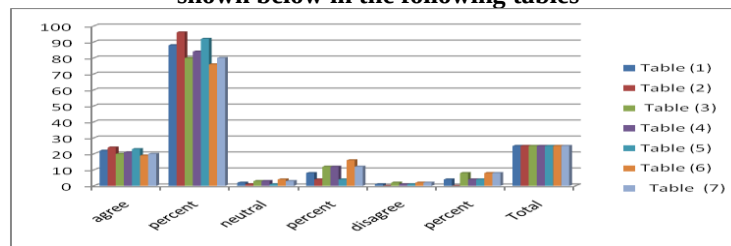
Tables	agree	percent	neutral	percent	disagree	percent	Total
Table (1)	22	88	2	8	1	4	25
Table (2)	24	96	1	4	0	0	25
Table (3)	20	80	3	12	2	8	25
Table (4)	21	84	3	12	1	4	25
Table (5)	23	92	1	4	1	4	25
Table (6)	19	76	4	16	2	8	25
Table (7)	20	80	3	12	2	8	25

1 Lesiak-Bielawska, E. D. (2015). Technology in English for specific purposes pedagogy. English for Specific Purposes World, 48(16), 1-23.

2 Butler-Pascoe, M. E., & Wiburg, K. M. (2003). Technology and Teaching English Language Learners. New York: Pearson Education, Inc.Centered Approach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press



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Results and Discussions

Statement(1) ESP courses achieve their goals in many areas of science.

Table (1) indicated that (88%) of the sample agree that, ESP courses achieve their goals in many areas of science (8%) of the sample are neutral and (4%) disagree with the statement. According to the statistical analysis the statement is justified.

Statement (2) ESP syllabus matches students' learning needs.

Table (2) indicated that (96%) of the sample agree and (4%) are neutral , ESP syllabus matches students' learning needs. Therefore, this statement is proved.

Statement (3) ESP learning requires good communicators in specialized information.

Table (3) showed that most respondents (80%) agree that ESP learning requires good communicators in specialized information while (12%) are neutral and (8%) disagree with the statement.

Statement (4) needs analysis enable instructors to distinguish ESP teaching and learning materials.

Table (4) showed that the majority of the sample (84%) agree that needs analysis enable instructors to distinguish ESP teaching and learning materials,(12%) are neutral and (4%) disagree. This statement is justified.

Statement (5) modern workplace communication requires professionals communicators in any subject area.

Table (5) showed that most of respondents (92%) agree that modern workplace communication requires professionals communicators in any subject area, (4%) are neutral and (4%) of the sample disagree. Therefore, this statement is proved.

Statement (6) internet method enhances ESP teaching and learning.

Table (6) indicated that (76%) of the sample agree that internet method enhances ESP teaching and learning while (16%) are neutral and (8%) disagree with the statement. This statement is justified.

Statement (7) ESP learning depends on mastering English for general purposes

Table (7) showed that (80%) of the sample agree that ESP learning depends on mastering English for general purposes while (12%) of the sample are neutral and (8%) disagree. Thus, this statement is accepted.

Conclusion

This study aims at investigating difficulties in ESP teaching and learning process and ensuring the need for modern teaching techniques in ESP setting. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method. The data for the study were collected by means of a questionnaire from ESP learners at Sudanese Universities. Then the data were analyzed by SPSS program.

Findings

- 1.ESP courses achieve their goals in many areas of science,.
2. ESP learning requires good communicators in specialized information.
3. Needs analysis enable teachers to distinguish ESP teaching materials.



4. Modern workplace communication requires professional's communicators in any subject area.
5. The internet methods enhance ESP teaching and learning,
6. ESP learning depends on mastering English for general purposes.

Recommendations

1. ESP Teachers should be trained to use modern technology.
2. ESP teaching materials should match the global themes.
3. ESP courses should be designed to match the future changes.
4. Technology should be used in teaching ESP courses.

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