The Role of ESP in Economic Sciences and Technology

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Abstract: Needs analysis is an important stage to design any language course, be it English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course or English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. A qualified ESP course is the course that meets the students' needs in the teaching and learning process, ESP courses then, focus on the language, skills, and genre appropriate to the specific activities the learners needs to carry-out in English. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of English language on the commercial domains; it aims at discussing the English language needs of the students in English for specific purposes.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Needs Analysis, Target Situation Analysis, Teachers' Role, Questionnaire.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the Second World War, the world became dominated by two forces, technology and commerce, which in their relentless progress soon generated a demand for an international language. For this reason, the demand of English language grew, especially in countries where English language is taught as a foreign language. English started to be more used in particular areas and fields, such as English for Business, English for Medical Studies, and English for Engineering Studies etc…

The effect was to create a whole new mass of people waiting to learn English, not for the pleasure or prestige of knowing the language, but because English was the key to the international currencies of technology and commerce. Hutchinson& Waters (1987) stated: "*As English became the accepted international language of technology and commerce, it created a new generation of learners who knew especially why they were learning a language*".

Thus, these demands and requirements have resulted in the expansion of one aspect of English language learning, that is to say the learning English for Specific Purpose (ESP). ESP became a significant trend in the movement of teaching Language for Specific Purpose (LSP) by the 1970s; ESP became a crucial activity within the teaching of English for Learning Teaching (ELT). Undoubtedly, ESP today has gained a wide popularity over the world. Dudley-Evans and St John (2001) explained that: "*The demand for English for Specific Purposes continuous to increase and expand throughout the world*".

After that English language became the working language, everyday millions of people all over the world use English for business purposes and activities. Business is about buying and selling or more broadly, exchanging and exploiting resources and capabilities. It uses the language of commerce, of finance, of industry, of providing goods and services. It is about design and innovation, traditions and values, about persuading and understanding, power and control, explaining and finding solutions to problems. In short, business English is communication with other people within a specific context.

2. ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP)

A. Definition of ESP:

ESP can be defined as teaching and learning English as a second foreign language for the purpose of using it in a particular domain. We would expect the ESP community to have a clear idea about what ESP means. This may depend on how people interpret the meaning of ESP. It may be described as simply as being the teaching of English for any purpose that could be specified. Others are more precise, describing it as the teaching of English used in Academic studies or the teaching of English for Vocational or Professional Purposes. ESP is defined to absolute and variable characteristics. The definition of Dudley-Evans is influenced by that of Stevens (1988). For Stevens, ESP is in contrast with General English and has included more variable characteristics. According to this view, ESP is not only concerned with a specific discipline, but should be seen as an "Approach" to teaching or an "Attitude of Mind" as stated by Dudley-Evans (1988). Similarly, Hutchinson& Waters (1987), state that: *"ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning".* Hutchinson& Waters (1987:47).

B. Types of ESP:

David Carter (1983) identifies three types of ESP: English as a Restricted Language; English for Academic and Occupational Purposes; English for Specific Topics. The language used by the waiters is an example for English as Restricted Language. For Mackay and Mountford (1978), the repertoire required by the controller or the waiter is limited and by the way is determined according to situations. The tourist, the waiter, the controller cannot communicate effectively in a novel situation outside the vocational environment. The second type of ESP is English for Academic and Occupational Purposes. For Hutchinson &Waters (1987), ESP is broken down into three branches: English for Science and Technology (EST); English for Business and Economics (EBE); and English for Social Studies (ESS). Each of these areas is divided into two branches: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). EOP for the EST branch is English for Technicians; whereas, EAP for the EST branch is English for Medical Studies. The third type is English for Specific Topics which is concerned with English for future need (Carter, 1983). The following figure 1 summerizes all types of ESP:

C. Characteristics of ESP:

- ESP has certain characteristics:
- It is designed to meet specific needs of the learners.
- It is related to content (particular description, occupations and activities).
- It is centered on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics etc.
- ESP is related to purpose, in the sense that teaching should be based on the reason of learning English.
- Stevens also listed two variable characteristics of ESP.
- Restricted as to language skills to be learned.
- Not taught according to any pre-ordained methodology.
- For Carver (1983), there are three characteristics common to ESP courses: Carver's model focuses more on purpose and authenticity.
- Authentic Materials: materials modified by teachers are common in ESP. The students are usually encouraged to conduct research via the internet.
- Purpose-Related Orientation: the teacher can provide his/her students with different tasks such as to interpret charts and tables, reading the preparation of papers and writing.

- Self-Direction: it is necessary that teachers encourage their students to participate in the planning of the lessons (autonomy-freedom to decide).

3. THE SITUATION OF ESP IN ALGERIA

Generally speaking, English for specific purposes is usually underestimated because the teachers are not aware of what ESP takes to be successful. The situation in Algeria is a little bit complicated since there is not a real difference between ESP and English for General Purposes (EGP) when it comes to syllabus design and methodology; moreover, teachers neglect needs analysis which is the crucial in a design of an ESP course.

ESP today receives much attention due to the dominance of English in many fields such as Biology, Medicine, Computer Science and Economy, and with the emergence of the LMD system, English is more required. In many Algerian workplaces, academic and professional ones, a certain level of the understanding of English Language is required. It is almost impossible to be engaged in any work in Algeria without some competence in the language use (the case of the petroleum national company: Sonatrach). Many workplaces have placed greater emphasis on effective communication as a requirement in their staff requirement and retention on the job. For instance, the ability to communicate orally in seminars is a skill relevant to the majority of occupations. As the purpose of language of education in Algeria have to date never been systematically formulated, it is important that they are defined in an explicit way so that all parties concerned (students, teachers) are aware of the relevance of the language program to the expectations of those who participate in it. This concept of purposes is to be effective if it takes place in a context where all who are concerned to revise their attitudes and reconsider their understanding of the rational behind teaching and learning ESP. another way to encourage the effectiveness of teaching ESP in Algeria is to value the role of ESP practitioners involved in the ESP teaching to students whose needs can be specified in advance and in a more systematic way than is the case of General English.

4. THE IMPORTANCE OF NEEDS ANALYSIS: BRIEF TOPIC LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea of focusing on learners' needs originated in the 1970s resulting from the interest in the design of language courses that could satisfy individual and social needs (Palacios Martinez 1992:135). Its development evolved in association with the teaching of languages for specific purposes. In 1978, Munby proposed his "Communication Needs Processor" (CNP), a model for needs analysis which was quite influential, and stated that the design of syllabus for language courses could only take place after a preliminary work on the learners' needs. However, Munby just produced a list of the linguistic features of the target situation in his model, and as Garcia Mayo (2001) claims there should be more to needs analysis than that. Being aware of the needs of the learners' influences not only on the content of the language course, but also what potential can be exploited through such course. Needs analysis is a complex process which has to take into account what Hutchinson& Waters (1987:54-63) define as "target needs", what learners need to do in the target situation-i.e. language use, and "learning needs", what learners need to do in order to learn-i.e. language learning. In a more modern view, we should not only take into account "target needs" and "learning needs"-i.e. objective needs- but also learners' subjective needs-i.e. their affective needs, such as their interests, whishes, expectations and preferences (Nunan 1988). We can gather information about learners' needs through different media (Hutchinson& Waters 1987:58; Palacios Martinez 1994:143): surveys, questionnaires, interviews, attitude scales, intelligence texts, language tests, job analyses, content analyses, statistical analyses, observation, data collection, or informal consultation with sponsors, learners and others. Furthermore, needs analysis should not only be considered as a pre-stage for the design of language courses; in fact, it is an "on-going process" (White 1998:91) and, as evaluation, it can be used to design, improve and implement language programs.

5. TEACHER'S ROLE IN ESP

Most authors agree that the ESP teachers' works involve much more than teaching. Dudley and Evans and St. John (1998) prefer the term *practitioner* as this definition refers seems to be more detailed and complete. They distinguish the following role of ESP practitioners.

Figure (1): Teacher's role in ESP.

Although ESP is meant to deal with new teaching programs involving both the teachers and the learners, the study presented in this paper is mainly focusing at this stage on the teacher's role in ESP. In fact, in ESP, the teacher is not unfortunately playing a central role, as he is only considered as a source of information needed to develop competencies demanded by the learning process. But as a teacher, he needs to have a considerable flexibility, be willing to listen to learners, take the interest in the discipline or professional activities the students are involved in, and to take some risks in their teaching as cited in Bojovic 2006. As a course designer and material provider, ESP teachers need to assess the effectiveness of the teaching materials used whether it is published or self-produced. However, since the teachers are encouraged by their employees to write a new material there is a danger of constant re-invention of the wheel; advantages of published materials are ignored even when they are suitable for a given situation. Due to the lack of materials for ESP courses, the ESP practitioner is expected to plan his course well and accordingly to provide the materials of his pupils. The teacher's task also includes adapting materials when published materials are unsuitable, or his/her own material lack the proper authenticity. With reference to a particular class room experience, the design of the course shall be prepared. The levels of attainment are described for each of the skills areas (listening, speaking, reading and writing). As a researcher, ESP teachers need to be in touch with the research. Teachers carrying out the needs analysis, designing a course, or writing teaching materials need to be capable of incorporating the finding of the research, and those working in specific ESP situations need to be confident that they know what is involved in skills such as written communication as cited in Bojovic 2006.

6. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This study aims at investigating the English language needs of Commerce and Technology on the basic of their perceptions. The design of the study was based on Hutchinson& Waters (1987) target need approach (NA). It is crucial to note too that among the variables that NA of ESP will identify a list of relevant skills that learners must master in order to accomplish the specific academic purposes for which they need specialized training. In addition, in order to investigate Economics Science students' English necessities, we tried to find out their perceptions of the frequency of their use of the English language skills and the importance of these skills to them. Thus, the research project was conducted by designing the questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. Two questionnaires were proposed: the teachers' questionnaire and the students' questionnaire. A pilot study was conducted among students at the department of Economic Sciences within the LMD system. The participants were first year Master students. The questionnaire was delivered to assess the usefulness of various activities in English and learners' perceptions of their performance and achievements in these activities.

A. Participants:

The respondents were teachers and first year Master students who study Economic Sciences. There were 25 participants altogether. The subjects were both males and females at an intermediate level. The sample refers to the year 2012. Research employed two questionnaires as we have mentioned before: the teachers' questionnaire and the learners' questionnaire.

B. Research instrument (the questionnaire):

The questionnaire is a data collection instrument which is considered as a mean of collecting data from participants. The questionnaire is a structured instrument for the collection of data which translate a research hypothesis into questions. The students' questionnaire employed for the students was used to analyze the needs and assessments of the usefulness of various activities, the learners' reflections on their performance in various tasks as well as their perceptions on teaching materials. Based on the feedback received from the pilot group we put together a final version of the questionnaire. Another questioner was written in English and distributed to six teachers. The target respondents were teachers who have conducted English lessons at the department of Economic Sciences. The teachers' profiles are presented in Table 1as follows:

Table (1): The Teachers Profiles.

Answer of teachers	Number of teachers	Expressed in %
License of English	5	83%
Magister of English	1	17%
Total	6	100%

In this study, a questionnaire was used as the only method on enquiry. This questionnaire was designed to identify teachers' perceptions regarding the English language course they are presenting. For the purpose of collecting data about the challenges faced by English language teachers at the department of Economic Sciences in Algeria, a number of questions were developed with reference to the relevant literature. Among the items which covered the challenges; the raising of the motivation of classroom students to learn English as a foreign language; a focus of some teachers on teaching English away from its communicative context; the modifications that English language syllabus sees without sufficient training of teachers on their applications; rarity of consulting experts in the preparation and organization of English language courses; absence of preparing teachers in the field of ESP; negative attitudes of some students towards the English language; lack of experience; lack of preparation in the subject- matter (Economic Sciences) and the pedagogy of English language. (Cohen& all, 2007: 78) asset the following: "***The purposes of the research determine the methodology and design of the methodology".***

C. Data analysis and results discussion:

Even though, the selected sample (25 participants both teachers and learners) in this survey seems not to be sufficiency representative, the information collected from the questionnaire is very useful and good enough to yield several deductions about the role of ESP in Commerce and Technology. The findings resulting from a thorough data analysis were very helpful in extracting precious information on the present state of ESP and its application. The results of the present study serve as a main guide for evaluating and redesigning the current courses presented to Economic Sciences students during the previous year, to suggest our own syllabus based on the needs of the learners, and to acquire experience in teaching English for Economic Sciences. The concept of a language syllabus has been fundamental in the development of language teaching practices according to Richards (2001). Hutchinson& Waters (1987:80) claim that a syllabus is "**a *document which says what will be learnt".*** Moreover, considering the students' learning needs indentified by teachers on the perceptions in terms of the importance of the four skills, the important language teaching methodologies based on the concept of authenticity is more than required. Furthermore, the findings have important implications for English teaching at the department of Economic Sciences. First, it is important to take into account the target learners' level of proficiency in English before starting to design the ESP program. This significantly helps in determining the study needs of the students; second, the selection of the language materials should be relevant to their future work and to future research. The inclusion of materials from the subject matter of the students will motivate them to learn English effectively. The result showed that language materials should be in line with the discourse of Economic

Sciences, and should have suitable contents to their level and their target situations of English use. As a rule, this section attempts to discuss the findings of the present study. The results of the students' English language needs and their perceptions of the English language course, the results in terms on necessities, lacks and wants of Hutchinson& Waters'(1987) target needs framework, are discussed briefly. Firstly, regarding the Economic Sciences students' English language necessities in general; students have to know that there are many skills in order to function effectively in the target situation. This was evident from the results discussed earlier which present the frequency of English language skill use and the importance of these skills. Interestingly, all the skills have been perceived by the subjects to be important to acquire. Moreover, we have deduced that English plays a significant role in the Economic Sciences context. In addition, in terms of lacks in the English language, the study showed that the students do not have an adequate level in English ability. We rated their level to be weak in the most important skills. In general, their perceived level of performance was not satisfactory. In terms of wants, the subjects demonstrated interest in receiving training in speaking, listening and writing. Nunan (1989: 176): asserts: *"the effectiveness of a language program will be dictated as much by the attitudes and expectations of the learners as by the specifications of the official curriculum"*.

7. CONCLUSION

English for specific purposes (ESP) can be defined as the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language for the specific purpose of using it in a particular domain. Its evolution along the decades reflects the use of computers in language teaching and learning and the impact of the internet on this process was enormous. Thus, the scientific discoveries and technical innovations of the "information age" have triggered bilingual and multilingual communication to become a significant issue in our modern society. It is crucial to set up a quite suitable syllabus for Economics Science students in order to promote learning, encourage and motivate the students to learn English. Our main focus within this syllabus is to facilitate the task of learning, and enabling them to gain access to the work at all levels. This may be possible if we can design a syllabus based on their expectations, and on authenticity. Moreover, it is of paramount importance to think about recruiting permanent teachers of English at the department of Economic Sciences. In addition, the main focus in learning a foreign language is to be able to use it in the outside world. One of the most important tools in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) and learning are the materials used during the lessons. Nowadays, there is a wide range of materials available for teachers to use; however, the courses may be more effective if teachers design their own materials based on the requirements of the learners and authenticity so that learners be able to communicate in any form. This process requires communicative competence or ability to know what to say and how to say it correctly in appropriate situations. Therefore, authentic language should be used whenever possible in the classroom. This type of learning based on authenticity and the Communicative approach enables learners to transfer what they learn in the classroom to the outside world.

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