

## ESP as a University Course to Prepare Degree Students for the Workplace

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**Abstract:** *ESP as a university course was first introduced into Algerian higher institutions after the national LMD reform in 2004. It aims at bringing in students to use English in a variety of fields such as medicine, law, economy, journalism, engineering, business etc, by the end of the course; they are supposed to be able to apply for a job, write a business letter, report a scientific experiment or name the parts of the human body or a car or any other invention. Unfortunately, only few universities all over Algeria are carrying to offer ESP courses to their students, claiming that students of English are generally directed to teach in middle schools and secondary schools after they finish their degrees, therefore; ESP is not really essential for them. Our investigation aims at looking at the roles of ESP in preparing these graduates to use English for Academic or / and professional purposes. To answer the following research question: which ESP course materials do prepare degree students best to the use of English for academic and / for professional purposes? Testimonies of five former students of ESP who are currently actively engaged in different teaching, academic research and business would be exploited to check whether ESP as a university course is necessary for the workplace after graduation. Finally, a set of implications for ESP as university course for a better preparation of brand new majors in English would be presented.*

**Key words:** ESP – Academic / Professional Purposes – Materials

## **Introduction**

The objective of teaching ESP to students of English is mainly to develop among these the ability to use English in a variety of fields such as Medicine, Tourism, Translation, Business and other domains as well. The university of Abderrahmane Mira at Bejaia was a leading institution in the teaching of ESP. As opposed to many other Algerian higher institutions, ESP is still taught for first year degree students and second year Master students enrolled at the university of Bejaia from 2004 until the present time .

### **I. Statement of the Problem**

Many universities through the country have stopped the teaching of ESP or are teaching ESP only for first degree students of English or have entirely frozen ESP as a master specialty.

This study aims at investigating the following problem: no matter how the teaching of ESP is achieved, restricted or omitted; does the teaching of ESP as a university course in the Algerian context guarantee a good preparation for English degree holders to properly fulfill their vocational requirements?

## **II. Review of the Relevant Literature**

The study of Hemche attempted to investigate the problem we have previously discussed. She undertook a study in year 2014, after a decade of implementing ESP into Algerian higher education settings. One main conclusion the study has stated is that ‘ESP teaching in Algeria is still failing to cope with students’ target needs and facing a lot of shortcomings in terms of learning conditions and teacher training, teaching load, materials and aid’.

In an ESP context, the aims and objectives of the courses are multiple, varied and constantly changing. As Benmanssour clarifies it in her article entitled *ESP in the Light of the Globalization Process*; ‘ESP courses are goal directed, ESP teachers have to carry out a needs identification and analysis in order to design relevant materials’.

These two Algerian researchers (Hemche and Benmansour) agree upon the necessity of satisfying students target needs and essentialize the inclusion of these into the presentation of the ESP course.

### III. Methodology

This study was realized thanks to the testimonies of five (05) former students who studied ESP as a university course after 2004, i.e. after the newly applied LMD reform. The data collected from their testimonies are purely qualitative which makes of the research an ethnographic one. These participants were contacted via Facebook and asked to answer the following question: *Would you describe in a paragraph of 150 words maximum your ESP learning experience at university, and how did ESP as a university course prepare you to meet the demands of your current profession?*

The data gathered thanks to these five writings served to answer our research question which is as follows: *to which extent does the teaching of ESP prepare English graduates for their careers?*

## IV. Results and Discussion

	<b>Year of Graduation</b>	<b>Current profession</b>	<b>Opinion about ESP as university course</b>
Participant 01	2014	Shop assistant	<i>'No relationship between what I do now and ESP '</i>
Participant 02	2013	Import/ export agent	<i>ESP is not of great help when I first started my job</i>
Participant 03	2011	Part-time teacher of English at a private language school	<i>'In addition to the ESP course content I furnished much effort to prepare my content lessons'</i>
Participant 04	2015	Doctoral student and part-time university teacher	<i>'I wish ESP contained some Academic English'</i>
Participant 05	2013	Middle school teacher	<i>'The one year of ESP did not teach ELT '</i>

Most significant statements:

I) ‘ ... I remember well ESP during my first year at university but I do have no memory of it during my master studies. Honestly, I don’t remember either we had ESP or not in my master. ‘ ( Participant five)

II) ‘ ... the funniest thing which happened to me during my first year ESP course was that the teacher asked me to show the position of kidneys in the human body then I pointed at my belly and they all laughed and from that day on I knew that my kidneys where exactly at the bottom of my back. At least ESP taught something helpful !’

III) ‘... reduced passive form!!! I studied biology for a decade and I have never met this structure; I who majored in Biology from High school. During my first year, most of the courses instructed language as opposed to ESP which taught language and content.’

IV)’... every time a student enrolled in a new course offered by the private school where I teach, I had to apply and subscribe to a free-tuition online course, complete all the lessons by myself then I could finally get to prepare the lessons to teach to my students. It felt like I was back to being a student again, taking into account that I was accomplishing the role of the teacher as well. It was time-consuming, tiring and complex. If only some

aviation introductory course could have been covered during my time at university!'

## **VI. Limitations of the Study**

- A greater sample of participants favoring the use of questionnaires would lead to more significant conclusions and more concrete results.
- Interviewing experienced and trained teachers of ESP is necessary. Insights about needs analysis, ESP course design and ESP teaching resources can only be supplied by these subjects.

## **VII. Implications**

- A comparative study between the teaching of ESP at first year level and second year level is more than needed to enquire why most of the participants do qualify their first year ESP course as a memorable learning experience even if it is remote in time as opposed to the second year master ESP course.
- ESP teachers should conduct an ESP needs analysis on a yearly basis to meet the students expectations, interests and lacks.

- ESP teachers ought to adopt the suitable ESP course design approach not only to increase their students motivation, but also as to work on their teacher development.

## **Conclusion**

A growing number of ELT teachers all around the world are increasingly devoting time, effort to do research into ESP. Sophisticated subjects such as computational linguistics, digital design and ecology could only be simplified and introduced to language education if enormous development in ESP course design, evaluation and assessment measures and teaching approaches are achieved.

The future of teaching and learning English as a foreign language lies between the hands of improving ESP. Nowadays; Algerian baccalaureate candidates sit English exams that involve astronomical, ecological, civic and intellectual contents; thanks to the insertion of the ESP approach as another dimension into secondary level educational reform. We deduce that it's high time, higher education included the ESP approach dimension into the implementation of the LMD reform.



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