

**THE ATTITUDES OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
STUDENTS TOWARDS ESP COURSES IN BISHA UNIVERSITY- AL NAMAS,
SAUDI ARABIA**

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ABSTRACT: *There is a growing importance for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses in English for Foreign language (EFL) context in the Arab Region due to the rapid technological advancement and development of academics in various fields. Thus, there is an emerging need for ESP courses cater to the students' needs and help them do well in their respective academic and professional fields. This study aimed at finding out the opinions/attitudes of the students and teachers in the Departments of Computer Science and Business Administration in the College of Sciences in Bisha University, Al-Namas in introducing ESP courses to the curriculum in level one and two. The required data was collected by the use of the tools of questionnaires, and informal interviews with the teachers of the subjects from the department of English, the department of Computer Science and the department of Business Administration. The results revealed that the majority of the students were not happy with existing materials. The students said that they would be more motivated to learn ESP courses than general English provided in their textbooks. Therefore, both students and teachers also were in support of introducing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses to their present syllabi.*

KEYWORDS: English for Foreign language (EFL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Needs Analysis (NA), English as Foreign language (FL).

INTRODUCTION

ESP is a branch derived from the idea of the learner-centered approach. However, it has started to look at the learners needs and, as name suggests, it focuses on identifying the specific purposes and needs of English for a particular group in different pedagogical environments. Identifying the needs help learners in many ways. ESP. Strevens (1988), as cited in Dudley-Evans & St John (1998), brings clearly four advantages of ESP which show how ESP as separate and significant area to different environment whether in ESL or EFL. (a) ESP focuses on the learner's need and it does not waste time. (b) It is relevant to the learner. (c) It is successful in imparting learning. (d) Finally ESP is more cost-effective than General English. Therefore in this paper we aim at exploring to what extent the students of Computer Science and Business and Administration departments need ESP courses and their attitudes towards the General English textbooks given two them. The study will help in examining the advantages of ESP addressed in the literature of ESP in EFL context. Since ESP focuses more on learners' needs and requirements, it is useful to develop the English skills of learners and it motivates them to perform well in many aspects match with their needs. On this regard of learners' motivation, Mihalache (2015) in the study, 'motivation vs. need of ESP engineering students', found that an increasing interest in understanding English in oral communication and in acquiring specialized vocabulary in order to be more competitive on the demanding labor market when they finalize their studies. The research work concluded with highlighting the

importance the need for more courses on ESP in the university program. Similarly in this study we would like to highlight the importance and the need for ESP courses in EFL environment which strongly enhance the motivations of learners to perform better as the ESP textbooks would match the learners' needs.

The paper is classified into four broad sections. Section one briefly introduces the reader to certain aspects about ESP and gives a brief theoretical background about ESP and Needs Analysis. Section two gives hints of the studies about ESP in EFL contexts with a close reference to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) where English is taught as a Foreign Language (FL). Section three presents data collection, how and why this study was conducted. In we elucidate the data results of the study. Section four concludes the study with a summary of the findings of the study and provides suggestions for further studies.

ESP and Needs Analysis

There is a strong correlation between ESP and needs analysis. It is a commonly known fact that NA is the *cornerstone* of ESP and many studies and projects have been done on ESP based on ESP. In this part we will give some hints to the reader about ESP and Need analysis.

Dudley-Evans & St John (1998) presented a series of characteristics to give a clear definition of ESP. **(1) Absolute characteristics** which include (a) ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learner;(b) ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves; (c) ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities. **(2) Variable characteristics** (a) ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines; (b) ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English; (c) ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level;(d) ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students; (e) Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners" (1998, pp. 4-5).

Needs Analysis (NA) is growing fast as the prominent factor in language education and has gained much attention in the field of ESP literature, which focuses primarily on the learners needs (Hutchinson and Waters 1987; Johnson 1989; Richards 1990; Robinson 1990). Need Analysis is very important factor in building any ESP course. Needs analysis is neither unique to language teaching nor within language training but it is often seen as being the corner stone of ESP and leads to a very focused course (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 122). Hutchinson and Water (1992) clearly pointed that the students' needs analysis is a key factor in the development of any ESP course and it is learner-centered as learners know the specific needs for their learning and the learners should be considered in the design of the course. Martin (2003) also mentioned that the needs analysis to ESP focuses on collecting detailed language which is used for many vocational or specific language needs.

Nunan (2006) defined NA from another perspective, considered it as information gathering includes the techniques and procedures to design any syllabus. Brindley (1989) looked at NA by comparing objective and subjective needs. The objective needs are gained from the factual information about learners, the use of language in real world and communicative situations, and the learners' proficiency. Brindley explained the subjective needs are derived from the learners' affective and cognitive factors which include issues such as personality, confidence, attitudes, wants, and expectations in the learning process of English.

The Demand for ESP in KSA

In this part we highlight the importance of ESP in KSA as a rich EFL context where English is taught and learned in many specific areas and for various and particular purposes. There is a strong need for ESP in KSA due to the wide spread of English in many international companies in Saudi Arabia and the emergence of many academic institutions. ESP projects and programs have increased rapidly due to its importance. They are helpful and significant to the learners of any target group in various professional and academic levels to provide them with English specific aspects related to their needs. Similarly, many relevant studies on ESP have been carried out in KSA show the importance and the realistic and increasing demand for English for Specific Purposes.. They all call and reinforce the status of starting genuinely with developing and designing ESP projects. Al-Subaie recently (2016) called for the importance and the need for ESP in KSA to cope with rapid changes and development in many fields in KSA. Alsubaie supported the idea of establishing an ESP organization to achieve the needs of the ESP community (such as practitioners, designers, teachers, and students). Such organization will work together in producing ESP materials which match countries 'needs in various occupational and academic institutions and fields. Al-Ahdal and Al-Mashaqba (2016) found in their study in Al- Qasem University, the need for ESP for the non-teaching staff as they were not able to communicate well with non-Arab speakers, who speak English in university in academic or non-academic levels. Moreover, AL-samani and Daif-Allah (2015) examined the effectiveness of introducing project-based instruction in the classroom in KSA, Al-Qasem University. The aim of the study was to develop specific English language vocabulary for Computer Science students. The study showed the effectiveness and importance of the suggested project-based ESP course in developing the English vocabulary for the target subjects. The results explored that the project will enhance the teaching and learning of ESP and develop new study habits for learners by promoting self-directed, cooperative and independent learning out of classroom.

Many researchers in KSA believe that there should be a growing and widespread concern in conducting training and workshops on ESP as an important field English Language Teaching (ELT) in many academic institutions to develop ESP materials. Alsolami (2014) examined the challenges and the barriers facing English General Purposes (EGP) teachers to become ESP practitioners in the English Language Institute at King Abdulaziz University. He found that the barriers are due to the lack of functional academic literacy, knowledge of ESP field, lack of training, and lack of ESP materials. He suggested that the barriers which hinder EGP teachers to become ESP practitioners can be faced through considering ESP as a challenging field which requires interest and determination. Teachers also should get involved in ESP workshops and seminars. Practically there are many calls and focus on developing and designing ESP materials in KSA in many majors such as English for Medical Purposes (EMP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). Javid (2011) attempted to find English for Medical Purposes (EMP) needs for medical undergraduates. The study explored the course content and tasks to teach EMP course for fresh graduates. The study recommended that there should be emphasis on EMP more that English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to help the learners do well in the medical studies. This only highlights the urgency and the essence of addressing students' needs, by introducing ESP Courses.

METHODOLOGY

The rationale of the study.

Students in the departments of Computer Science and Business Administration in Bisha University at College of Science in Al-Namas do not have prescribed textbooks cater to their specialization and needs. They have some textbooks which are not primarily designed for them and do not match with their needs and requirements. The textbooks¹ taught in level one and two as English requirements are prescribed for either the Bachelor Degree students of English or for the students who want to improve their proficiency in English. The textbooks include General English which do not match their academic and professional needs. Therefore, this study primarily aims at (1) examining the needs for ESP syllabi and (2) exploring the reasons and needs for ESP syllabi.

Participants

The participants of the study are 80 students from the two departments, Computer Science and Business Administration at Bisha University-Al-Namas, KSA. Twelve teachers from the various departments in the college including teachers from Computer Science Department, Business Administration department, and English department who teach English for the target group. The selected teachers have been part of the study to get clear results as experts in both academic and professional levels. Their attitudes about the ESP courses will help us determine and examine the students' attitudes.

The Procedure

The tools of the study include (a) two questionnaires and (b) informal interviews with students and teachers of the target fields and teachers from English department. First questionnaire is translated from English into Arabic and distributed to the students of the department of Computer Science and Business and Administration to know the attitudes and the needs for the syllabus. Second questionnaire is distributed to the teachers of the English Subjects taught in the targeted departments and the same questionnaire is distributed to the teachers of Computer to get a clearer picture about the real needs for improving the syllabus. (2) Informal interviews with teachers and students were done to get further access in affirming the data and understanding their needs at a personal level.

The Study Questions

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

- (A) Is there a need for ESP course for Computer Science and Business and Administration students from the participants' point of view?
- (B) If yes, why and what are the needs/ the purpose for ESP course for BS students for this type of students?

¹ Some General English course books include, for instance, Open Forum English Series, Oxford Press and Well Read 1: Skills and Strategies for Reading series. We would like to note that there is a new plan towards a genuine change of English subjects books applied recently in Bisha University started in 2017 and Headway English series are included in the curriculum as new textbooks for all levels instead of the course books mentioned above. Thus, in this work we are still suggesting that it would be useful to provide ESP courses for the two departments instead of general English books as ESP course books would help students in both academic and professional levels.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data utilizing the percentage technique. After data coding, bar Graphs were drawn to represent the obtained data from the questionnaires. Then the figures are converted to percentages. In this section, we present the results along with the discussion of the results collected from the participants in the study. Firstly, it is found that the majority of the students were not happy with existing materials when we asked them for their attitudes about the existing materials of English. Figure 1 shows that the majority of the students, (more than 80%), and were not satisfied with the existing materials.

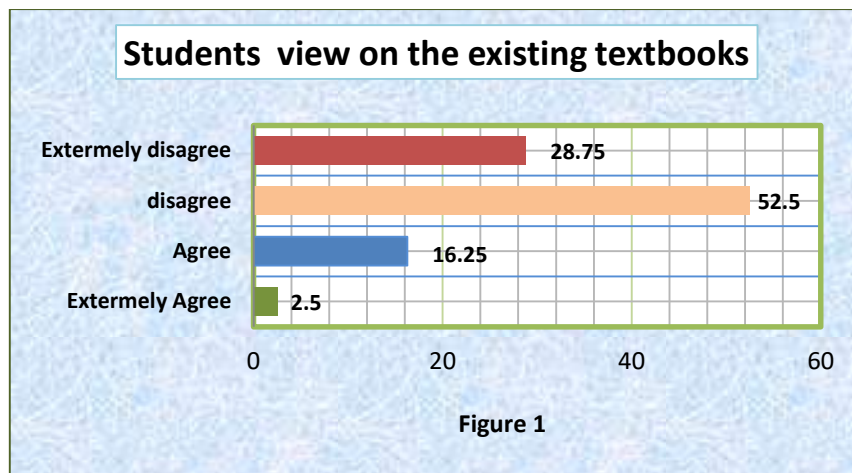


Figure 2, concerns with the question, '*the need for ESP course*', shows that the majority of students responded that there is a need for ESP courses in the department. Participants' responses were quite similar in Figure 3, when we asked them about '*their motivation in case they had ESP textbooks.*' The results showed that there is a need for ESP courses. The majority of the students felt that they would be more motivated if they had ESP textbooks.

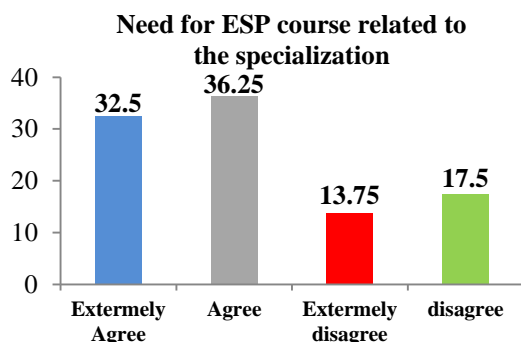


Figure 2

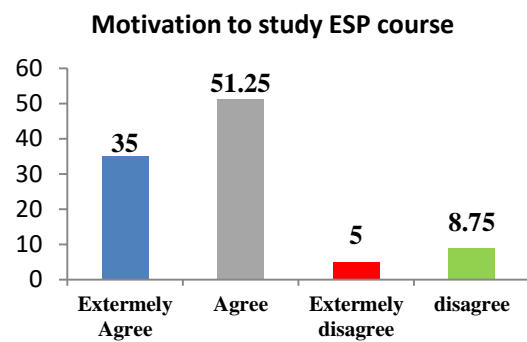


Figure 3

Two questions were specifically included in the questionnaire to get students views about how useful and important students feel if they would have ESP courses as part of their syllabus

instead of general English text books assigned for them in level 1 and 2. Comparatively, the results of data analysis in Figure 4 and 5 reveal that it would be useful and important to have ESP textbooks related to their specialization. More than two thirds the students showed the usefulness of ESP courses for the target departments, whereas 7% and 10% responses showed that it would not be useful to have ESP textbooks. Similarly, the participants explored the importance of ESP courses for the students (between 40%-46.25%) whereas less number of the students feel that it would not be important to have ESP textbooks, (6.25% and 7.5%).

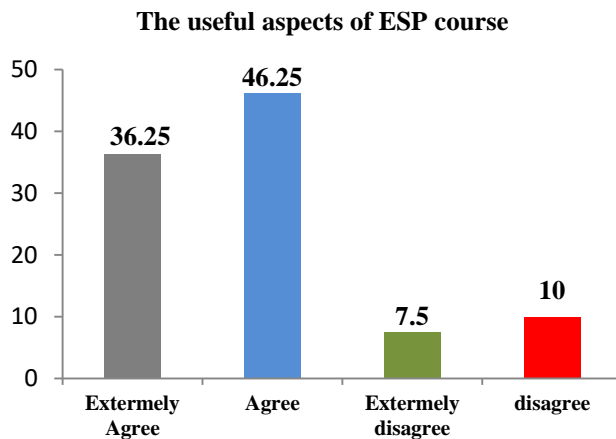


Figure 4

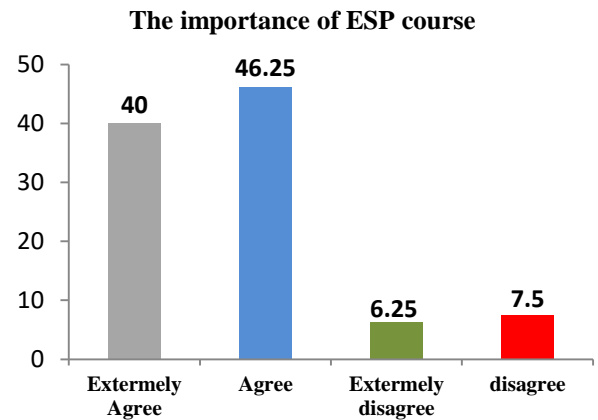


Figure 5

The questionnaire distributed to all the teachers of the target groups (Computer Science and Business and Administration) and the English teachers of English subjects supported strongly the idea of having ESP courses. They all agreed that ESP courses were important and would motivate students learn better. This is because ESP courses would help the students do better in their academic and professional careers. Therefore, the informal interviews with the teachers and students we noticed that the majority were with the idea of providing students with ESP courses which would be more useful and important to students than having general English.

CONCLUSION

It appears from the data analysis that there is a need for ESP courses caters to the students' needs in the departments, Computer Science and Business Administration of Bisha University. Interestingly, the results showed that the students were aware of the importance and the need of having ESP courses related to their specializations. They also are not satisfied with the existing materials. Teachers and experts in the college of Science and Arts in the field of Business Administration, Computer Science departments, and English teachers in the department support strongly the idea of having ESP courses materials. The results explored that the students are in need of textbooks which match their academic and professional needs. There are many valuable pedagogical implications of the study. Firstly the research work strongly highlights the importance of providing ESP materials to the learners instead of General English materials in EFL contexts. Secondly, such type of study is a starting point for analyzing the existing materials in the departments and can be a turning point for designing ESP textbooks framework for the target group and other institutions with similar environment. The study

showed the students' willingness to study ESP textbooks related to their specialization and need for change of general English textbooks. This provides a strong encouragement for a genuine change of the existing materials.

However, there few limitations of the study which can be avoided in further studies in future: (1) the population sample was less as it was conducted in one of colleges in University of Bisha in Al-namas district and including various colleges under the University of Bisha would have got more useful results in the study. (2) Conducting a field work teaching experiment with readymade and prescribed ESP materials on the target students would have given more comprehensive findings of the study. (3) More focus on the entire linguistic skills and content of ESP textbooks in the study would have lead to more comprehensive conclusions about the needs.

Overall, the conducted study strongly indicates how much desired it is to introduce ESP Courses. It would only further help in designing syllabus that are student effective and learner-centered as this is a primary need when seen in the EFL context.

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