Evaluating the Impact of the ESP course for the PYP students at Aljouf University

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Abstract:

　　This paper is extracted from the researcher's thesis Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D. in English Language. The paper aimed to evaluate the impact of the ESP remedial course implemented to the PYP students at Aljouf University in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the academic year 2014 – 2015. This study investigated the ESP course instruction process in terms of the materials selection and the outcome of the course. The researcher adopted the pretest- posttest methodology to collect the data for this study. The overall findings of the study show that the objectives of the course is achieved. Based on the study findings, the researcher recommends to adopt ESP courses as main parts of PYP English program for freshman in Saudi Universities.

Key words: English for specific purposes **(**ESP), PYP, Aljouf University

INTRODUCTION:

English as number one communication, science and arts language in the world is shifting the first language as a medium of instruction (EMI) in most of non-Anglophone countries all over the world. Some non- native English countries use English as a language of teaching from basic school to university level, when other states teach English language as one of the general education subjects. Due to the importance and spread of English language, most of the overseas universities adopt it as the medium of instruction. The reason behind the floating of this language on the surface of the languages ocean is the rapid development of the global economy and technology which are presented in English even in the countries in which English is a second or a foreign language.

According to (Julie Dearden 2014), EMI is increasingly being used in universities, secondary schools and even primary schools. This phenomenon has very important implications for the education of young people. Yet little empirical research has been conducted into why and when EMI is being introduced and how it is delivered.

Saudi Arabia is one of the countries where English is taught as a subject in the elementary, intermediate and high schools. Some universities adopt English as a medium of instruction, but most of them teach it as a high education requirement subject. Like most of the Arab countries, Students in Saudi Arabia graduate from the high school with very weak and limited English command what led some of the universities to adopt the preparatory year programs (PYP) as a gap bridging tool between the students' English language level and the required level of English in the tertiary education in general or the colleges in which English is the language of instruction.

Specialized terminologies and expressions within a certain language sometimes refer to the specific discourse used by professionals and specialists to communicate and transfer

information and knowledge in the workplace. This is what is known as Languages for Specific Purposes (Miguel F & Juan C., 2010).

English for specific purposes (ESP) it taught in the PYP at Jouf university to students who are expected to join scientific colleges like medical sciences, engineering and applied sciences. The purpose of ESP courses in the PYP is to provide students with the required English terminologies and workplace language for the colleges they are planned to join.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Aljouf University in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia adopts English as a medium of instruction in colleges of medical sciences and engineering. The instructors in those colleges complain about the English language skills in general and English terminologies in particular of the PYP graduators who join schools of medical sciences and engineering. As a solution, the researcher suggested an ESP course to be adopted by the deanship of the PYP at Aljouf University as a remedial program to be implemented along with the general English course in the academic year 2014 - 215. The main purpose of the ESP course is to improve the students' situational medical and engineering terminologies and workplace English. The researcher as a PYP vice project manager and English instructor presents this paper as an evaluation study to the effectiveness of the ESP course to find out if it has achieved the objectives and enhanced the student's terminologies and situational language awareness.

SIGNIFICANT OF THE STUDY:

Hutchinson & Waters (1987) state that the evaluation of the learners reflects not only the learners' performance but also to some extent the effectiveness or otherwise of the course. Accordingly, the present study tries to evaluate the

effectiveness of one of the ESP courses which is being taught in the PYP at Aljouf University.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

This paper aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the adopted ESP course by the deanship of the PYP at Aljouf University in the academic year 2014 – 2015. The study also aims to investigate the suitability of the selected ESP materials to the PYP students in terms of level, academic and workplace needs.

QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY:

1- To what extend is the adopted ESP course in the PYP at Aljouf University achieves the program objectives and developed the students ESP terminologies awareness?

HYPOTHESES:

1- The ESP course in the PYP at Aljouf University achieved the objective and enriched the students' English terminologies and workplace language skills.

Limitations of the study:
This study is limited to the PYP students at Al Jouf University in the academic year 2014 – 2015.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

English for specific purposes (ESP) has been continuously growing since the 1960th to become today an essential branch of English language teaching (ELT) (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). It's very clear that ESP is spreading all over the world as a main subject in most of the universities especially in countries where English is not the first language. According to

(Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987) ESP as a sub-section of ESL, it gives more concentration on building terminologies, situational dialogues and workplace language, but still grammar and structure of the language are involved.

It becomes evident to say that an ESP initiative involves three spheres of knowledge: the core of the language, pedagogy and the content of the students' specialisms. Therefore, it is necessary to undertake a linguistic analysis in order to try to describe those 'Special Englishes.' The major difficulty would be then to compare them to 'General English' and to draw the attention to the differences between the two, which arise at all the levels of language.

In providing general English courses the sole priority of the teacher is to widen the general educational program. In other words, learners are taught the elements of the language essential to any program (Broughton 1981). The aim behind such a process is, generally, to prepare learners to pass examinations and tests whether they are sufficiently fluent in the English language or not since general English courses do not cater for the learner's immediate operational needs as opposed to ESP; these courses are known to be language centred, i.e., teachers are more concerned with transmitting their message than satisfying their learners' needs and expectations. In an ESP context, the aims and objectives of the courses are different as compared to general language. In traditional literature differences between specialized and general language in the lexical, morpho-syntactical, textual and pragmatic features are constantly pointed out as central issues. (Mc Donald, 1980; Robinson, 1989-1991; Scarpa, 2001; Serianni, 2003). ESP courses are goal directed. ESP teachers have to carry out a needs identification and analysis in order to design the relevant materials. The starting stage would be that of defining the notion of the discourse of the specialties the students are concerned with, i.e., the notion of 'Specialized

Discourse' (Robinson 1991). This discourse does not in fact represent a sociolinguistic variety but an actual language which embodies a mixture of combined more or less specific features coexisting in a quantitatively different degree as compared to general English. The most outstanding feature of this Specific language is the lexicon. As Sager et al put it, "the lexicon of special languages is their most obvious distinguishing characteristic" (1980:230) which prevails from the related syntax. The reason is that a large number of these lexical items is used exclusively in their specific context and hence carry only one meaning (the notion of monoreferentiality or semantic uniqueness). Besides, these words are information carriers of a referential precision. They lack any kind of emotional and connotative meaning. The same syntactic features of General English but it is different from that in the frequency of use. Conciseness and precision, which are a central matter in ESP, are usually syntactically achieved through the omission of phrasal elements such as articles, prepositions, and other function words; as it can also be achieved by avoiding relative clauses and subordination in favor of solid, long nominal groups and coordination with complex pre-modification and nominalization which are persistent in Specific language and help give more objectiveness and precision. In other words, ESP needs to be characterized by elementary surface structures and very simple Syntax (Brekke 1989). The choice of tenses is also essential in ESP. Brekke maintains that the present seems to be the most widespread, especially in scientific texts though the use of other tenses is regulated by the degree of generality of what is being reported. In addition to this one, we need to point at the considerable use of the passives in ESP. Robinson (1991) claims that the passive assures a degree of depersonalization of the language used.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can be defined as teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language for the purpose of using it in a particular domain. Since 1960s

ESP has become a distinctive part of Teaching English as a Foreign Language(TEFL) its importance being due to the fact that English has become the contemporary lingua franca. Thus, the growing demand for English as a medium of communication and the introduction of governmental mass educational programs in which English was the first or even the only language contributed to the rapid expansion in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to which ESP belonged initially. The communicative trend in teaching and learning English has resulted in different reasons for acquiring this language proficiency: daily communication, academic or business purposes and English for Specific Purposes was created with all these in view. There are various definitions of ESP: According to Harmer it refers to "situations where the student has some specific reasons to learn a language". Hutchinson is more specific when he declares that ESP is" An approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and methods are based on the learner's reason for learning". The same idea is supported by Strevens because as he says, the "ESP is particular case of general category of special-purpose language training. The same principles apply no matter which language is being learnt and taught". Ten years later, Duddley – Evans et al gives a similar definition of ESP and both authors cooperated to offer absolute and variable characteristics of ESP. Most researchers seem to agree on two characteristics: a) ESP is based on a particular context; b) ESP is based on the learners' specific needs.

Defining ESP has proven to be so problematic to researchers that producing a simple and straightforward definition of ESP is not an easy task (Strevens 1987, p. 109). ESP, generally speaking, refers to a particular group of students learning English for specific fields or a professional career. In contrast to General English (GE), which normally addresses general topics, ESP focuses on specific topics and skills ESP learners need in a particular subject area.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) attempted at only constructing a workable definition since they believed that ESP is to be deemed a process approach rather than a product.

Some researchers (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001; Strevens, 1987) endeavored to produce other workable definitions and characteristics of ESP. Most of them agree that ESP is intended to cater for learners' specific needs in particular disciplines; it employs a specific different methodology from GE as it focuses on some activities in a particular area of study or discipline with its special discourse, semantics, syntax, etc.

Richard (2001) proposed some features of ESP teaching. He argued that ESP is to help those who are already fluent learners and immigrants to deal properly and appropriately in their workplace and to use English in their engineering, science and nursing careers, for instance. He believed that special instruction materials were to be devised to meet the learners' particular technical purposes when working and studying in English-medium academic and professional contexts. Any design of an ESP course, therefore, needs to be tailor-made and goal-oriented while keeping in mind the learners' specific needs. Mackay and Mountford (1978) characterised the learners' technically specific needs as "clearly utilitarian purpose" (p. 2). They argued that certain participants or learners need a special language in order for them to be competent in the language employed in their settings. Similarly, Robinson (1987) classified ESP as a particular course; in which learners have scientific, occupational, and academic specific goals and purposes.

It is also noticeable that almost all ESP definitions are circled around two areas: the ESP participants or learners' needs (e.g. medial English) and the language used in real-life context (e.g. hospital); the two features of ESP are closely related to every aspect of ESP teaching in order for a utilitarian purpose to be achieved. What seems problematic in describing ESP is the meticulous effort in deciding the kind of discourse,

such as vocabulary jargon or register that is to be taught and to reflect accurately the communicative purpose in a specific context the learners need (e.g. patient-nurse talk). Discourse diversity can be so overwhelming and confusing to ESP course designers as the learners' needs analysis can yield a large numbers of needs, purposes, discourse, etc.

METHODOLOGY:

The researcher will apply the pretest- posttest frame as data collection methodology to a group of students selected from the sample of the case study to find out whether the ESP remedial course was successful to enhance the students' language competence.

Subject:

The total number of students in the preparatory year at Aljouf University (Gorayate Branch) for the second semester in this academic year (2014 – 2015) is 200 students**.** Fifty students are randomly selected as a sample for this study from the 200 students who passed the first semester and transferred to the second term where the remedial ESP program takes place.

Tool:

Pre- and post-tests are used to measure knowledge gained from participating in a training course. The pre-test is a set of questions given to participants before the training begins in order to determine their knowledge level of the course content. After the completion of the course, participants are given a post-test to answer the same set of questions, or a set of questions of comparable difficulty. Comparing participants' post-test scores to their pre-test scores enables you to see whether the training was successful in increasing participant knowledge of the training content. In addition, a well-designed pre- and posttest can help trainers understand which concepts

or competencies were well taught during the training and which ones need additional time, or need to be covered using alternative methods.

The designed test for this study is divided in to five main question and eight subsections. The total mark of the test is 50. Question one is a writing skill testing in which students are expected to write a well-designed hundred words paragraph about (where does he / she find him/ herself in the next ten years. The second question is a reading skill test. The reading section consist of a direct comprehension check questions and a (True & False) part. Grammar and structure are covered in the third section of the test with a question formation part and a speech reporting part. Section four is vocabulary oriented in which students' are asked to match words to their meanings. The test is ended with the listing section with two parts. The students will listen to two dialogues and then answer questions and fill in a chart.

Procedures:

The researcher will administer the pretest to the selected sample at the beginning of the second week in the second semester. Students will be located in two classes with 25 students and three invigilators each. The Test time is two hours, but students will have the option to leave whenever they finish. Exam papers will be gathered, marked and saved by the researcher to be analyzed along with posttest after being implemented at the end of the semester.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

This chapter discusses and presents the data analysis, interpretation for the analyzed data and test of the results against the hypotheses, questions and objectives of the study.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PRETESTS AND POSTTESTS RESULTS:

The test consists of five main question and eight subsections. The total mark of the test is 50. Question one is a writing skill testing in which students are expected to write a well-designed hundred words paragraph about (where does he / she find him/ herself in the next ten years. The second question is a reading skill test. The reading section consist of a direct comprehension check questions and a (True & False) part. Grammar and structure are covered in the third section of the test with a question formation part and a speech reporting part. Section four is vocabulary oriented in which students' are asked to match words to their meanings. The test is ended with the listing section with two parts. The students will listen to two dialogues and then answer questions and fill in a chart.
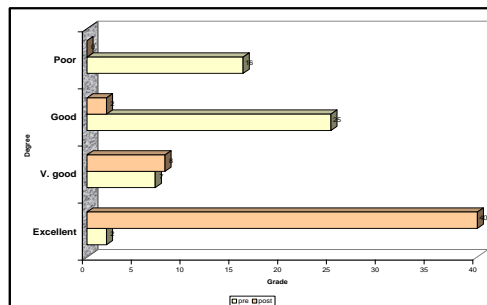
STATISTICAL ANALYSIS ENGLISH FOR HEALTH SCIENCES

Table (4-42) Frequency distribution of the English for health sciences.

Group	Level			
	Excellent	V. good	Good	Poor
Pre	2	7	25	16
Post	40	8	2	0

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2016

Figure (4-36)

Source: The researcher from applied study, Excel Package, 2016

From the above table and figure, it is shown that the students who have obtained *excellent* were (2) when (7) have obtained *very good*, (25) have obtained *good* and (6) have obtained *poor* in the pretest. In the post -test (40) Students have obtained *excellent*, (8) have obtained *very good*, and (2) have obtained *good*.

Regarding the above results and analysis, it is noted that there is a development in the performance of students in the post-test. The scores of the students focus in the degrees *excellent* and *very good.*

Table (4-43)
Different between pre & post of the English for health sciences

Test	Mean	Std. Deviation	Correlation	T-value	P-value
Pre	17.64	8.62	0.786	-31.890	0.000
Post	43.02	4.95			

From the above table, it is clear that:
1. The P-value of T-test (0.000) is less than significant level (0.05) that mean there is statistical difference between pretest and posttest in for pretest.
2. The coefficient correlation between pre and post is (0.786) that mean there is stronger and positive relation between pre and post.

CONCLUSION:

This study intended to investigate whether the ESP course outcome has succeed to provide the targeted colleges at Jouf University with the PYP graduates who are aware of at least the basic terminologies required to study in the field of health science or engineering and ready for a pure teaching in English as a medium of instruction.

To answer the question and hypothesis of the study, the researcher adopted the pretest – posttest methodology to show

if there is a correlation between the students' English competence and terminologies awareness before and after the test.

The collected data went through different computing processes to analyze them and find answers for the study questions and hypotheses. The researcher used the results of the analyzed data and the answers of the hypotheses to interpret the findings and the recommendations of the study.

Results of the pretest – posttest analysis show a clear improvement in the PYP students ESP level. The result indicate that the course has achieved its main objective which is to raise students' abilities in applied medical and engineering terminology.

RECOMMENDATION:

- ESP courses should be implemented as a main part of foundation or preparatory year programs.
- The prescribed materials should be selected or designed regarding the learners' academic, workplace needs and language competence.

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