

Evaluating the Suitability of the ESP Materials Implemented to the PYP Students at Aljouf University

Dr. TAHIYA ALSHAIKH ALHAMEEM YOUSIF

Assistant professor

English Language Department, Faculty of Education

Alza'eem Alazhari University, Sudan

ELHAFIZ MOHAMMED AHMED ELWALY

English language lecturer

Deanship of the preparatory year

Aljouf University, KSA

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 ESP materials implemented to the PYP students at Aljouf University in KSA (academic year 2014 – 2015). This study investigated the ESP textbooks and the outcome of the course to evaluate the suitability of the selected materials to the objectives of the program and the level of the students. The researcher surveyed the ESP instructors in the dean ship of PYP and interviewed the instructors in colleges of applied medical science and engineering to collect the data for the study. The overall findings of the study show that the selected materials achieved the objectives of the course but, instructors in colleges of medical applied sciences and engineering complained about lack of comprehensiveness of the implemented ESP materials. Based on the study findings, the researcher recommends that ESP materials should be comprehensive enough to cover the learners' needs and must be implemented only to students with at least intermediate English language command.

Key words: English for specific purposes (ESP), ESP materials, Preparatory Year Program PYP, Aljouf University

INTRODUCTION:

In every teaching context, textbooks play an important role in imparting learning and assisting teachers to fulfill their responsibility. According to Riazi (2003, p. 52), "textbooks play a very crucial role in the realm of language teaching and learning and are considered the next important factor in the second/foreign language classroom after the teacher."

Textbooks are among the most important resources utilized to achieve the aims of a course which are based on the learners' needs. However, they should not become the aim of the course themselves and set those aims (Brown, 1995). Regarding the importance of the textbooks, one should make sure that those books meet appropriate criteria. In Cunningsworth's (1995) words, we should ascertain that "careful selection is made, and that the materials selected closely reflect the aims, methods, and values of the teaching program" (p.7). One of the methods which can help us in achieving the aforementioned material evaluation is a matter of judging the fitness of a selected textbook for a particular academic purpose. Evaluation is, then, concerned with relative merit. There is no absolute good or bad- only degrees of fitness for the required purpose. In any kind of evaluation, the decision finally made is likely to be the better for being based on a systematic check of all the important variables. The results of an evaluation will probably lead to a large investment of money in a published course or a large investment of time in home produced or adapted materials. A careful evaluation, then, can save a lot of expenses and time. On the positive side, it can also help in justifying request in sponsors or other members of an ESP team for money to buy materials or time to write them.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Aljouf University in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia adopts English as a medium of instruction in colleges of applied 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 gradulators 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 - 2015. 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 selected ESP materials and the outcome of the course to evaluate its suitability to the objectives of the course and the level of the students.

SIGNIFICANT OF THE STUDY:

According to Baleghizadeh & Rahimi (2011), Brunton (2009), Ellis (1997), and McDonough & Shaw (2003) scheme for ESP textbook evaluation, ESP materials evaluation is essential and necessary to assess the learners' benefit from the current courses and present better materials for future ones.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

This paper aims to evaluate suitability of the selected ESP materials to the PYP students at Aljouf University in the academic year 2014 – 2015. The study also aims to investigate comprehensiveness of the selected ESP materials to the PYP students and to what extent does it cover their future needs in colleges of applied medical sciences and engineering.

QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY:

- Does the selected ESP materials achieved the course objectives?
- To what extend does the selected ESP material comprehensive enough to cover the PYP students' needs in their target colleges?

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY:

- The selected ESP materials is suitable to achieve the course objectives.
- The selected ESP material covers the learners' needs in their target colleges.

Limits of the study:

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

LITERATURE REVIEW:

ESP materials are the useful means in language teaching. "Teaching materials are tools that can be figuratively cut up into component pieces and then rearranged to suit the needs, abilities, and interests of the students in the course." (Graves, 1999, p.27). ESP materials can be done for different reasons and can be presented in different forms. Kennedy and Bolitho (op.cit) points out that ESP materials are helpful in making students read then get the meaning, read then write such as summarizing or paraphrasing, listen when teachers read from them, speak when the teacher motivates his students to communicate, or do different tasks when the teacher integrates different skills. Activities are very useful means in language teaching. They are of different forms: reading, listening,

speaking and writing. Each specialty is based on some skills according to students' needs and the form of the present lesson. Some institutions may use the same ESP material for different classes ignoring the variation among different classrooms. Also, some of them may use the same material in all lectures. In this situation, students will get bored and may hate this class. That is why appropriate ESP materials selection would be important and can play a crucial role in ESP lesson planning. Ellis and Johnson (1994) distinguish between two levels of materials selection. The first one occurs at the beginning of the course when teachers suggest their course books and materials. The second level occurs when the teacher is going to select items from the chosen course book. Benmakhlof Azza (2013) states that most, if not all, ESP lessons include the use of an ESP material or series of materials. Not all students enjoy them and not all lessons provide appropriate ESP materials selection. There is no rule for selecting or adapting them but some said that following specific criteria may make it easier for them. Paul (1996) proposes a division of the lesson into two parts: educational and fun sections. Selecting materials for ESP students does not resemble the same as selecting for general English students which need only print, audio, and video materials as Ellis and Johnson (op.cit) point out. For ESP teachers, the selection extends the use of what is available. Sometimes, they need to adapt or look for over the shelf materials in order to help ESP students achieve their aims. When doing so, they need to respect certain criteria.

Ellis and Johnson (ibid) explain the criteria for selecting ESP materials: types of learners and their language level, relevance, learners' age and cultural background, and appropriateness of methodology or style. Moreover, they emphasize the distinction between different types of learners and their language level; pre-experience learners and job-experienced learners. Relevance of language and skills is the second key element that must be respected when selecting

materials. Another important criterion is to respect learners' age and cultural background. In other words, types of activities differ among groups of different age, background knowledge and cultural features. The last element is the appropriateness of methodology or style for learners. In other words, "the trainer should experiment to find out an approach to use with a particular group and then select activities accordingly." (Ellis and Johnson, *ibid*, P.127).

Wallace (1992) suggests the following criteria when selecting ESP materials.

- Adequacy: the selected materials should contain appropriate language and information about the course.
- Motivation: They should present interesting content in order to help students be active and work hard in order to understand better. This criterion should be respected in order to make students' work more effective.
- Sequence: It is important to have materials that are related to the lecture. There must be a relation to previous texts, activities, topics not to miss the sense of a lesson.
- Diversity: The selected material should lead to a range of classroom activities, be a vehicle for teaching specific language structure and vocabulary, and promote strategies.
- Acceptability: It should contain acceptable cultural customs and language.

METHODOLOGY:

The researcher will survey the ESP instructors in the deanship of PYP at Aljouf University to collect information about the suitability of the selected materials to the level of the students, their needs and the objectives of the course. Instructors in colleges of medical applied science will be interviewed to find out whether the course achieved the objectives.

Subject:

Forty instructors of ESP in the deanship of PYP will answer the questionnaire as first sample of this study. Eight instructors in colleges of applied medical sciences and engineering will be interviewed as the second sample of the study.

Instruments:

The researcher adopted a questionnaire and an interview to collect the data for this study. The questionnaire consist of statements about the selected materials to agree, disagree with or show uncertainty. The interview will provide this study with information about the outcome of the ESP course.

Procedures:

The researcher will start the process of collecting the data for this study with the questionnaire four weeks after the beginning of the second semester to ensure that the whole ESP course instructors have built a clear view and ideas about the material in terms of suitability to the students' level and needs, the allocated credit and contact hours and number of students' in classes. The interview will be administered in the last week of the semester.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

The statistical Analysis of ESP Instructors' Responses to the Questionnaire: Section four (ESP syllabus evaluation)

Question No. (1): The current ESP syllabus fits the students' level.

Table no. (1): The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers about question no. (1)

Answer	Number	Percent
Agree	11	27.5

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Not sure	8	20.0
Disagree	21	52.5
Total	40	100.0

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2016

It is clear from table no. (1) that (11) instructors in the study's sample with a percentage of (27.5%) have agreed with "The current ESP syllabus fits the students level ". Eight instructors with a percentage of (20.0%) were not sure and (21) with a percentage of (52.5%) have disagreed.

Question No. (2): The current ESP syllabus fits the students' needs.

Table no. (2) show the frequency distribution for the study's respondents about question no.(2).

Table no. (2): The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers about question no. (2)

Answer	Number	Percent
Agree	13	32.5
Not sure	14	35.0
Disagree	13	32.5
Total	40	100.0

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2016

Table no. (2) explain that (13) instructors in the study's sample with a percentage of (32.5%) have agreed with "The current ESP syllabus fits the students' needs ". There are (14) with a percentage of (35.0%) were not sure and (13) with a percentage of (32.5%) have disagreed.

Question No. (3): The current ESP syllabus achieves the academic goals.

Table no. (3) show the frequency distribution for the study's respondents about question no. (3).

Table no. (3): The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers about question no. (3)

Answer	Number	Percent
Agree	23	55.0
Not sure	8	20.0
Disagree	9	22.5
Total	40	100.0

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2016

It is clear from table no. (3) that (23) instructors in the study's sample with a percentage of (57.5%) have agreed with "The current ESP syllabus achieves the academic goals ". There are (8) instructors with a percentage of (20.0%) were not sure about that, and (9) with a percentage of (22.5%) have disagreed.

Question No. (4): The current ESP syllabus is workplace oriented.

Table no. (4) shows the frequency distribution for the study's respondents about question no. (4).

Table no. (4): The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers about question no. (4)

Answer	Number	Percent
Agree	19	47.5
Not sure	7	17.5
Disagree	14	35.0
Total	40	100.0

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2016

Table no. (4) show that (19) instructors in the study's sample with a percentage of (47.5%) have agreed with "The current ESP syllabus is workplace oriented ". There are (7) respondents with a percentage of (17.5%) were not sure, and (14) with a percentage of (35.0%) have disagreed.

Question No. (5): The current ESP syllabus enables students to achieve academic goals.

Table no. (5): The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers about question no. (5)

Answer	Number	Percent
Agree	19	47.5
Not sure	12	30.0
Disagree	9	22.5
Total	40	100.0

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2016

It is noted from table no. (5) that (19) instructors in the study's sample with a percentage of (47.5%) have agreed with "The current ESP syllabus enables students to achieve academic goals ". Twelve respondents with a percentage of (30.0%) were not sure and (9) with a percentage of (22.5%) have disagreed about.

The Statistical Analysis of the instructors in colleges of applied medical sciences and engineering interview:

Part two: Academic information about the first year students.

Question No. (1): *It's been six weeks since the beginning of the current semester. Do you notice any difference in the first year students' levels in English terminologies if compared with the level of the previous year's students?*

Table (1): The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers about question no. (1)

	Answer	Number	Percent
A	There is a great difference ranging from good to very good in speaking, writing and terminologies in particular.	3	37.5
B	The difference is obvious. This year students are totally different from the students of the previous years. This year students show convenient knowledge and awareness of specialization terminologies.	4	50.0

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C	In general students seem they are the similar level as last year. However, for terminologies the current cohort seems more prepared in vocabularies and ideas.	1	12.5
Total	Total	8	100%

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2016

It is clear from table (4) that (3) respondents from the study's sample with a percentage of (37.5%) agreed that “there is a clear improvement in the first year students’ levels in English terminologies if compared with the level of the previous year’s students”. There are (4) respondents with a percentage of (50.0%) answered: “difference is obvious and this year students are totally different from the students of the previous years. This year students show convenient knowledge and awareness of specialization terminologies”. Only one respondent with a percentage of (12.5%) answered: “In general students seem they are the similar level as the last year students. However, for terminologies the current cohort seems more prepared in vocabularies and ideas”.

Question No. (2): How do you find the students’ attitude toward English as a medium of instruction in this college?

Table (2): The frequency distribution for the respondents’ answers about question no. (2)

	Answer	Number	Percent
A	Although students’ English level is good, but they still complain about pure teaching in English.	3	37.5
B	I think students don’t even have time to show any behavior or attitude toward that rather than focusing in the subject they are learning	3	37.5
C	I didn’t notice any negative attitude toward teaching English	2	25.0
Total		8	100

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2015

It is clear from table (7) that (3) respondents with a percentage of (37.5%) answer was: “Although students’ English level is good, but they still complain about pure teaching in English with”. Three respondents with a percentage of (37.5%) answer was: “I think students don’t even have time to show any behavior or attitude toward that rather than focusing in the subject they are learning” .Two respondents with a percentage of (25.0%) answer was: “I didn’t notice any negative attitude toward teaching English”.

Question No. (3): According to the current students’ general English command and awareness of the major terminologies in English. Do you think that the ESP course was successful or not?

Table (3): The frequency distribution for the respondents’ answers about question no.(3)

	Answer	Number	Percent
A	Definitely the course was good due to the clear improvement of the learners’ level in English, but the course still needs to be extended in terms of materials and time to fit the workplace needs.	1	12.5
B	The ESP course was successful.	4	50.0
C	Increasing the amount of the terminologies and extending course duration or contact hours for more practice will prepare students very well for the workplace.	3	37.5
Total		8	100%

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2016

Table (8) shows that only one respondent in the study's sample with a percentage of (12.5%) answer was: “definitely the course was good due to the clear improvement of the learners’ level in English, but the course still needs to be extended in terms of materials and time to fit the workplace needs”. Four respondents with a percentage of (50.0%) answer was: “The ESP course was successful”. Three respondents with a

percentage of (37.5%) answer was: “Increasing the amount of the terminologies and extending course duration or contact hours for me practice will prepare students very well for the workplace about that”.

Question No. (4): What do you suggest about the ESP materials in terms of material content, the instruction process and the contact hours?

Table (4): The frequency distribution for the respondents’ answers about question no.(4)

	Answer	Number	Percent
A	The ESP course needs to be extended in terms of materials and contact hours	4	50.0
B	I suggest to give more attention to the skill of writing (reports writing and minutes writing in particular).	2	25.0
C	Try to improve the students’ general English level in to at least upper intermediate before implementing the ESP course.	2	25.0
Total		8	100%

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2016

Table (4) shows that four respondents with a percentage of (10.6%) answer was: “The ESP course needs to be extended in terms of materials and contact hours with”. Two respondents with a percentage of (25.0%) answer was: “I suggest to give more attention to the skill of writing (reports writing and minutes writing in particular)”. Two respondents with a percentage of (25.0%) answer was: “Try to improve the students’ general English level in to at least upper intermediate before implementing the ESP course”.

CONCLUSION:

This study intended to evaluate the selected and implemented ESP materials to the PYP students at Jouf University in the academic year 2014 - 2015.

To answer the questions and hypotheses of the study, the researcher adopted the questionnaire and interview to collect the data.

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 analyzed data show the selected ESP materials achieved the objectives of the course however, the results of the interview analysis show that the selected materials were not comprehensive enough to cover all the medical and engineering terminologies. Some of the ESP instructors' answers to questionnaire indicate a gap between the students' English language level and the level of the selected ESP materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ESP materials should be designed and selected according to learners' needs and general English levels.
- ESP course should be comprehensive enough to build the learners' terminologies awareness and workplace language.
- ESP courses should be implemented only to intermediate leveled students in English language command.

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