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**The Challenges Of Teaching English For Economics**Siham Sartorio<sup>\*1</sup>, Fatiha Hamitouche<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Department of English, University of Algiers 2 Abou El Kacem Saad Allah, (Algeria), sartoriosiham@hotmail.fr<sup>2</sup>Department of English, University of Algiers 2 Abou El Kacem Saad Allah, (Algeria), F\_hamitouche@yahoo.fr**Abstract:**

The aim of the present paper is to shed light on the major problems and barriers that hinder successful ESP teaching/learning in the Algerian University. It reports the findings of a study conducted at the faculty of Economic Sciences, Commerce and Management of the University of Ghardaia with a sample of 5 ESP teachers and 99 students enrolled at different departments across the faculty. Classroom observation and two questionnaires were used for data collection. The results revealed that ESP is facing many challenges in our universities among them: the lack of ESP syllabus, lack of ESP teacher training, lack of teaching resources, lack of students' motivation, large classes and insufficient instruction hours.

**Key words :** ESP, problems, difficulties, teachers, learners.

**المخلص:**

هدفت الدراسة الحالية إلى استكشاف الصعوبات والعراقيل التي يواجهها كل من أساتذة الإنجليزية والطلبة في كلية العلوم الإقتصادية والتجارة والتسيير بجامعة غرداية والتي تحول دون نجاح العملية التعليمية والأداء الجيد للطلبة في اللغة الإنجليزية. أجريت الدراسة مع عينة مكونة من 5 أساتذة للإنجليزية المتخصصة و 99 طالبا من أقسام مختلفة بالكلية. أظهرت النتائج أن الإنجليزية المتخصصة تواجه جملة من التحديات و الصعوبات من بينها : عدم وجود منهاج نقص تدريب أساتذة نقص موارد التدريس نقص تحفيز الطلاب العدد الكبير للطلبة بالأفواج وساعات التدريس غير الكافية.

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الكلمات المفتاحية: الإنجليزية لأغراض متخصصة، المشاكل، الصعوبات، الأساتذة، المتعلمين.

## 1. Introduction:

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, English has become a necessary requirement for having a good job and better future. English is the key for international contact in all fields and professions like business, politics, media, science and technology. That's why, the number of people willing to learn it is increasing day after another.

In Algeria, like in many other Maghreb and Arab countries, the educational authorities and policy-makers, being aware of its increasing importance in all domains, strive to develop and promote the status of English by introducing English instruction at all levels of education. At university level, English is taught for more specific purposes. ESP courses are offered for students at various specialism as biology, engineering, economics, social sciences, etc. The basic aim of the ESP subject is to enhance learners' language skills that enable them to use it effectively at future workplaces or to carry out higher level studies.

Currently, ESP courses are provided in all universities nationwide. However, it seems that ESP courses delivered in our universities and the teaching of ESP have to be viewed and reviewed since they have always been subject of discussion, complain and dissatisfaction from the part of both teachers and learners. Therefore, the present study calls into question the efficiency of ESP teaching in the Algerian University and attempts to shed light on the major difficulties and barriers that hinder successful teaching/ learning of ESP.

## 2. Theoretical framework Review of Literature

ESP teaching has always been regarded as a complex task and this complexity stems from its multi-disciplinary activity<sup>1</sup>. ESP practitioners hold more responsibilities than a common language teacher as they act also as course designers, collaborators, researchers and evaluators. For this reason, many scholars and linguists prefer to use the label 'practitioner' rather

than 'teacher' to emphasise that ESP course requires more than teaching.

A detailed study of related literature provides us with some issues confronted world-wide by ESP practitioners. Saliu<sup>2</sup> remarks that English for specific purpose "are designed to develop the communicative use of English in a specialised field of science work or technology". This makes the ESP practitioner's role more challenging since "the teacher is not the 'primary knower' of the carrier content ... The students may in many cases ... know more about the content than the teacher"<sup>3</sup>.

Belinda Ho<sup>4</sup> points out that course designers and teachers encounter problems related to the design of the ESP course, the tasks, assignments and teaching methods. ESP teaching demands well-trained teachers but research studies have revealed that most ESP practitioners are below the required strength which is the main reason behind ineffective ESP teaching<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, Chen<sup>6</sup> avows that the chances of ESP teacher education programs seem non-existent.

Suzani et. al<sup>7</sup> distinguish two types of factors affecting the success of language teaching and learning human and non human elements. Human elements are those related to the teacher's role, learners' characteristics and interaction in the classroom between students and the teacher or students and students. Non human elements are related to textbooks, syllabus, teaching aids and the number of hours of language instruction.

Many other researchers have stressed that motivation is a key factor for language learning. Mukkatash<sup>8</sup> avows that students' low English proficiency is linked to several variables including teaching methodologies, learners' demotivation and the lack of the target language. Dornyei and Otto<sup>9</sup> convey that motivation and demotivation are not stable phenomenon (changeable) and are affected by several learning context variables. Dornyei<sup>10</sup> describes demotivated learners as learners being originally motivated but by the influence of several unfavorable external variables lost their motivation.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Sample Population”

The study was conducted within the faculty of Economic Sciences, Commerce and Management at the University of Ghardaia during the first term of the academic year 2017-2018. A total of 5 ESP teachers and 99 undergraduates learners, enrolled at different departments of the institution, contributed to data collection.

#### 3.2 Research instruments

Two questionnaires were designed by the researcher to collect information about teachers and learners experience with ESP. In addition, regular ESP classes were observed by the researcher.

#### 3.3 Data Analysis

The investigator analysed data gathered using a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Qualitative research methods were used to analyse data gathered through classroom observation. Quantitative research methods were adopted for the analysis of data yielded by questionnaires. The researcher conducted a series of statistical analysis on the collected data using statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS).

### 4. Findings and Discussion:

Date gathered from teachers' questionnaire reveal that the majority of ESP teachers (4 teachers) at the faculty of Economic Sciences, Commerce and Management of the University of Ghardaia are part-time teachers. 2 of them hold bachelor degree in English and 2 have master degree in English. Only one teacher is a full-time teacher, and he is a subject specialist who holds PHD degree in Commerce.

**Table 1.** Teachers' training to teach ESP

Teachers' responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	5	100%
No	0	0%

The results reveal that all the ESP teachers under study did not receive any kind of training before teaching ESP. The reason for this is the absence of ESP culture in our country. There are no available training courses, nor workshops and seminars that introduce ESP practitioners to areas such as needs analysis, syllabus design, materials production and specialized language terminology to prepare them for their prospective job.

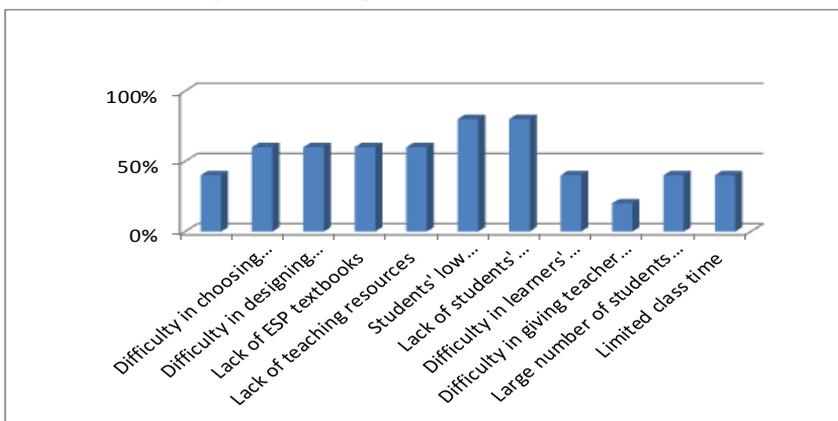
**Table 2.** Teachers' experience in ESP

Teaching Years	Frequency	Percentage
1-2	4	80%
3-10	1	20%
> 10	0	0%

Regarding Teachers' experience in teaching ESP, (80%) are novice and (20%) have intermediate experience. The high proportion of untrained teachers with very limited experience in ESP teaching apparently affects the quality of ESP teaching courses delivered.

The ESP teachers claimed that they face many challenges as summarized in the following bar graph:

**Fig1.** Challenges ESP teachers face



One of the biggest problems for the ESP practitioners (80% ) is learners' poor level of English proficiency. Other than few learners in the class, most of the learners have very low understanding of general English. This makes the ESP practitioner's job more demanding and challenging, as he/ she first has to build basic general English foundation and then to work on skills.

The second major problem is lack of learners' motivation (80%). Most of the learners were not interested about the ESP course. When the teacher gave them a task to do, they were talking with each other or doing homeworks of other subjects. There are many reasons for lack of learners' motivation, for instance, many learners do not understand the content of the ESP course because of their low proficiency of English, the big number of learners in the class and for many other learners, the ESP subject is secondary subject they have to study in order to graduate.

(40% ) of the ESP teachers face difficulty in understanding specific concepts and vocabularies related to students' field of study.

Without definite ESP teaching ESP syllabus, ESP teachers rely on their own knowledge to make decisions about the content of the ESP course and to design suitable teaching materials which is a big challenge for teachers; especially, as they are not subjects specialists and received no formal training in course design.

Another issue that ESP practitioners come across are large classes. Due to shortage of ESP teachers and the huge number of students, some administrators combine several groups into one large class. This brings up other issues, for instance, inability of the teacher to maintain classroom discipline and conduct classroom activities, learners' lack of understanding, lack of motivation and difficulty in teacher's feedback and learners' assessment.

(40%) of the ESP teachers claimed that they face difficulty in assessing learners in their classes. This can be related to several reasons : lack of teacher training, unavailability of proper

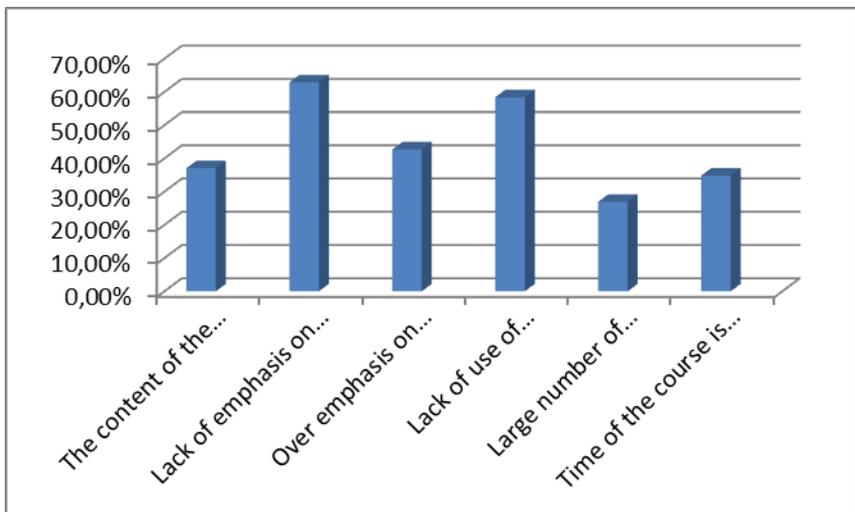
guidelines for evaluation, big number of learners and short time duration of the class.

(20%) of teachers faced difficulty in giving feedback to learners. This issue is again the result of large classes and limited duration of the class.

Both of the teachers and learners stressed that time allotted to the ESP course is not sufficient to meet course objectives. The teacher

When the learners were asked about their opinion about the current ESP courses, they complained about several things as the graph below shows:

**Fig 2.** Deficiencies in the current ESP courses



(37,08% ) of the learners are not satisfied with the content of the ESP course that they claimed does not match their needs. The course most of the time ,as the researcher observed, is limited to reading a text, explaining technical terms, answering reading comprehension questions followed by a series of boring grammar activities similar to those used in general English classes . Little attention is given to communicative skills, and the traditional way of teaching makes

students lose interest . This can be related to lack of teachers training and lack of ESP culture. In fact, many researchers agree that ESP practitioners should not use the same approach that is used in teaching general English because the two are different in their goals and objectives<sup>11</sup>.

Another issue is lack of use of technology in class, ( 58,43%) of the students stated that the teachers do not make use of such software and devices. The ESP teachers claimed that they are not available. In addition, some teachers are not familiar with the use of them and need training.

The learners (26,97%) consider large classes as not being comfortable environment for learning ESP. Moreover, (34,83%) claimed that the time of the course is not appropriate. The course is often programmed as the last session of the day, so the learners are tired and cannot concentrate.

### **5. Suggestions for ESP development in Algeria**

To solve these problems, a series of measures must be taken:

1-Sufficient administrative concern towards the ESP course and ESP teachers:

ESP teaching in our country is in a chaotic state due to two main factors implicit teaching aim and insufficient teaching syllabus. There are no ESP syllabuses with clear which clear specifications about course content, course objectives, evaluation criteria and teaching methodologies. Moreover, because of lack of ESP teachers, higher education institutions rely heavily on hiring part-time teachers. Those teachers; especially who are new in the field of ESP teaching and with very limited knowledge about students' specialism, are left on their own to design their courses from the scratch (no teaching syllabus and no ESP textbooks). The government should think of a radical solution to solve this problem. For example, ESP training institutions could be established to provide universities with enough qualified full- time ESP teachers. In addition, they must be implemented with ESP textbooks and audiovisual aids. In all higher education institutions, there must be some rooms equipped with computers, data show and internet reserved specially for the ESP course (language labs). Good command of

ICT use and mastery of English language are two main factors for the production of successful highly qualified members for the global market place; therefore, ESP teachers are recommended to update their teaching methods and tools according to the perpetual growth of ICTs. The use of ICTs can help ESP teachers to enhance their traditional way of teaching, makes teaching more fun and enjoyable and keeps students more engaged and motivated. The students can practice what they have learned and develop skills that they need to be successful in their future professions or to carry out higher studies such as how to make research on internet, using World and Excel Microsoft Office, creating presentations on Power Point, writing emails, meeting invitations and reports, etc. It is evident that one session (90m) per week is not enough to all the ESP course aims. There should be at least two sessions per week or more according to students' needs. Administrative holders should pay more consideration to the ESP course and ESP teachers in timetables. Moreover, the ESP course should have a coefficient similar to other specialty modules to give the module importance and more consideration from the part of students.

2-Training ESP teachers: most of researchers interested in assessing the progress of ESP teaching relate the failure of ESP courses to the lack of training<sup>12</sup>. According to Valdes<sup>13</sup>, a good a full or native like "a better command of the target language is a necessity but not sufficient condition" They should undertake a specialized training where other areas such as needs analysis, syllabus design, material production, specialized language 'terminology' should be carefully addressed. The reason for the lack of ESP training in Algeria is the absence of ESP culture in this country. Though their constant call for integrating ESP courses at all levels of higher education, the policy makers and curriculum designers haven't taken ESP teacher education seriously. There are no ESP training courses available to introduce ESP practitioners to ESP theory and practice of ESP, nor seminars or workshops to update their knowledge about ESP researches and increase their teacher motivation and awareness. Training ESP teachers will minimize several ESP problems and

their effects. Effective ESP teacher training programs are highly recommended if we want ESP to flourish and work for the students.

3-More linguistic researches must be done by ESP practitioners: Due to some historical and political reasons, ESP teaching started very late in our country and is lacking further theory studying. With absence of effective training programs, ESP practitioners need to train themselves to improve their teaching. ESP practitioners should keep themselves update with on- going research in the field of ESP and incorporate the findings of this research into their own situations. They should be innovative and constantly explore and evaluate their own teaching practices to make necessary adjustments to meet their learners' needs. Through acting as active action researchers, ESP practitioners can get better insights about their learners' needs. They can reach more innovative theories and approaches and offer practical solutions to other ESP practitioners working in similar contexts and facing similar problems.

4- Needs analysis should be the basis of ESP syllabus and course design: Needs analysis is "the corner stone of ESP"<sup>14</sup>. Designing any ESP course should be based on learners' needs so that the course will be effective, beneficial and meaningful for the students in question. Needs analysis involves compiling information both on the individuals who are to learn a language and on the use which they are expected to make of it when they have learned it<sup>15</sup>. It gives answers to questions such as who will learn the language, why, where and when the language is learned. Moreover, it determines the skills needed in the target situation in order to develop learners' skills to communicate effectively. The concept of needs analysis is a new for course designers in our country. Needs analysis has not been considered in ESP syllabus design. There must be an academic body or an institution responsible for ESP development in which both ESP practitioners and subject specialists team up and work together nationwide to create a national ESP curriculum based on insightful deep needs analysis of learners from different workplaces and on which clear specifications about course

content, course objectives, evaluation criteria and teaching methodologies are made. In recent years, a number of researchers across the country have been interested in ESP learners' needs of different fields and new forms for assessment. These findings should not remain on theory level and have to be exploited to produce ESP syllabuses of high quality.

5- More collaboration between language teachers and subject specialists in our universities: More efficient and fruitful ESP courses can be produced if content teachers and ESP teachers work together. ESP teachers often face difficulty in understanding specific terminologies and concepts related to students' field of specialism. In teaching English for economic purposes area, for example, there are some words which have a specific meaning in economy and cannot be translated without appropriate conceptual understanding. In such complicated setting, English teachers cannot work independently and require a closer cooperation with specialists to remove ambiguity. By implementing co-teaching, the ESP teacher can gain enough understanding of the students' target situation and learn different teaching methods, and the subject specialist can acquire English application abilities and cross-cultural communication abilities. The subject specialist who is more familiar with subject content will definitely assist the English teacher in choosing relevant content and designing suitable teaching activities. Cooperation between ESP teachers and subject specialists can be an effective way for ESP development in our country.

## **6. Conclusion:**

Failure of ESP subject in the Algerian Universities is rooted to fundamental issues that should be considered with caution attention by the government if we want ESP to flourish and work for the students. The Algerian government should pay more attention to ESP courses and ESP teachers by the supervision of useful teaching aids and organizing teacher training programs for ESP instructors, seminars, workshops, conferences and such activities for teacher development and ESP instructional hours should be increased. ESP practitioners and subject specialists should team up and work together

nationwide to create a national ESP curriculum based on insightful deep needs analysis of learners from different workplaces and on which clear specifications about course content, course objectives, evaluation criteria and teaching methodologies are made. In addition, ESP instructors should involve in action research and regularly evaluate their courses to ensure that goals and objectives are achieved and to make proper adjustments to meet their learner's needs and interests. On the other hand, the learners must be made aware that the ESP module is not introduced into the program to burden their heads with difficult English technical knowledge but for its importance for their future life; particularly, as English is gradually replacing the French language in all walks of life in our country. They should be motivated to make use of valuable learning resources outside the classroom and make them realize that the toughest task in learning English lies neither in vocabulary, nor grammar, neither in speaking nor writing, but in whether they themselves are armed with strong determination. It is my deep conviction that by developing ESP teaching and research, ESP would have prosperous future in our country.

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