

Evaluation of ESP Course Designed to First Year, Sudanese Law Students, Alneelain University From the Students' Perspective

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ABSTRACT:

The ESP courses were essentially emerged all over the world as a discipline to fulfill the needs of the learners to communicate worldly their speculation. As so, the ESP course is designed to be sufficient in terms of quality and quantity to obtain the aim to which it is designed. The present study is an attempt to evaluate the ESP course taught to the first year students, College of law, Alneelain University in order to judge whether it is adequate or not.

The study aims at evaluating this course in the light of the students' need in their specialization, investigating the students' perception about the real obstacles they face in learning the current ESP course and identifying the students' need in terms of legal aspects, and the language skills.

In the light of the above aims, the study hypothesizes that the current ESP course is irrelevant for the requirements of legal studies for the purpose of legal communication, it is uninteresting because it is mainly concerned with rules and grammatical forms, it does nothing with the students' comprehension of the legal foundations and theories for the purpose of social variables communication because it presents nothing from these aspects, and the functions of this course are not preserved for long time to serve the learners' career.

The instruments of the study revealed that this course is not scientifically designed to be used as ESP course because basically it was not prepared to achieve the global communication in terms of legal aspects. It is found that this course is a passive, uninteresting and instructor-centered. Furthermore it does not present any chance to use the modern style in teaching by using technology as a visual or oral aid means. According to the findings, the researcher recommends an alternative course to fulfill the real needs of the students depending on the basic standards in designing the ESP courses.

Key Words : *ESP, Global legal communication, Legal information*

المستخلص:

ان ظهور مناهج تدريس الإنكليزية لغير المتخصصين بها يعتبر ضرورة مهمة لتحقيق التواصل العلمي في التخصص المعين، وعليه فان اعداد هذا المنهج يجب ان يكون بطريقة تجعل المنهج صالحا لهذا الغرض من حيث نوعية المعلومات المقدمة للطالب في تخصصه ومن حيث كميتها التي تتناسب مع ما يحتاجه الطالب. عليه فان الدراسة الحالية هي محاولة تقويم منهج تدريس الانكليزية للأغراض الخاصة والمعتمد لطلبة السنة الاولى اكلية القانون بجامعة النيلين لمعرفة مدى صلاحية في تحقيق الاهداف الاساسية منه.

هدفت الدراسة لتقويم هذا المنهج في ضوء ما يقدمه من المعلومات التي يحتاجها الطالب في تخصصه ولمعرفة الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطالب ومعرفة ما يقدمه هذا المنهج في تطوير كفاءة الطالب في اتقان مهارات اللغة الانكليزية. في ضوء هذه الاهداف افترضت الدراسة ان هذا المنهج غير كفؤ في تعليم طالب القانون المفاهيم

القانونية لغرض التواصل مع العالم باللغة الانكليزية في مجال القانون وان هذا المنهج ممل ولا يمكن استخدام اي نشاط صفي في تعليمه كونه يعنى بقواعد اللغة وليس بأسس ونظريات القانون, كما وان محتويات هذا المنهج لا تخزن في ذاكرة الطالب للاستفادة منها لغرض التواصل في مهنته مستقبلا.

كشفت الاجراءات البحثية عن عدم اهلية هذا المنهج في اكساب طالب القانون ما يحتاجه فعلا من المعلومات المتعلقة بالأسس والنظريات القانونية لا كما ولا نوعا. على ضوء هذه النتائج اقترح الباحث شكل وخواص منهج بديل معدا وفق المعايير العلمية ليقدم للطلاب المفاهيم الاساسية التي يحتاجها للتواصل في تخصصه باللغة الانكليزية.

INTRODUCTION

The desire for learning English as a foreign and second language has increased since the middle of the previous century. This desire became an essential requirement after the Second World War to fulfill the global communication in different directions, such as commercial, industrial, military industries, agricultural, political, educational and others domains.

To meet the above desire, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has come into application as a part of the process of teaching/learning English as a foreign/second language and is qualitatively and quantitatively designed to be adequate to achieve the aim to which it is designed. However, there is evidence that the ESP history may return farther than even the First World War. It may return to the date of Grammar Translation Method during 1840s (Richards and Rodgers,1986:3).

Specialists like Colebrook:1996, Epstein:1996, Garcia:1994 among others (cited in Sha'lan, 2008:17-53) have presented different types with basic foundations in designing any ESP course, but to the contrary it was clearly observed that the applications of these foundations did not always give the intended or even the welcomed findings. The specialists mentioned above justified this defect by ascribing it to the gap between the theory and its

application in terms of socio-cultural and academic background of the foreign learners. In so, evaluation and reevaluation of a certain ESP from time to time is so important to check its fitness.

Sudan is not an exception; it is like other countries all over the world. Sudanic higher education follows the same worldly system in educating the ESP course for their students who are non-English specialists.

College of Law, Alneelain University for example depends a certain ESP course entitled "General English Course" to teach the first year/law students. It is supposed to teach the law freshmen the legal aspects, foundations and theories that are concerning the study of law.

Problem of the Study

The present study came to evaluate the above mentioned ESP course in order to find out whether it matches the standard criteria of ESP designing, this is from one hand, and to reveal to which extend the students of law benefit from it, from other hand.

Theoretically, this course (namely General English Course) comprises of six sections: four sections are concerned with the parts of speech from which the English structure is comprised (namely noun, pronoun, verbs, adverbs, adjectives and prepositions). The fifth part presents eight passages about

general and social status. The last part presents a list of some legal terms with their definitions to be memorized.

As a practical analysis, this course comprises of 163 pages. These pages present the information through three axes: the first axis (135 pages) presents only some English grammatical forms. This represents (83%) from the content of the text. The second axis (17 pages) offers only eight summarized tales (about one page length) that talk not about law or legal status. It represents (11%) from the text. The last axis presents legal items in only (10 pages) which represents (6%) from the text.

The problem which may be inferred is that the current ESP course focuses on grammar rather than legal aspects. It presents a large amount of grammatical knowledge (83% from the text). Furthermore, the text presents eight summarized tales talk about different social status which can do nothing in improving the student's specialization for the sake of worldly legal communication.

It is inferred that the text presents a very little bit of legal information which represent only (6%), while it would be much better to focus on these knowledge in an interesting, pleasurable and fun approach in state of presenting in form of terms and their definition. It may be said that this approach is a matter of memorizing for the purpose of examination not more.

The strange thing which is realized in this textbook is that the author himself, at the introduction, declares that this book is designed to equip the students with essential information of basic language skills but not basic legal information. The author continues saying that the sources of this book

focus on essential English grammar. It may be argued that learning "essential English grammar" almost has nothing to do with designing any ESP course which is supposed to be concerned mainly with providing the students a big amount of information related to their specialization in English language.

Due to the current design of the current textbook, and as long as it is concerned with essential English grammar, it may be said that it would be much better for this course to be entitled (Essential English Grammar Course) not "General English Course".

Again, the strange thing in the current ESP course is that no name is found nor any data is mentioned about the author of the course that make the author responsible about its contents, from one hand and to be dependable course from other hand. Furthermore, it has found nothing mentioned about the references or the sources from which this course is constructed, or the addressee to whom this course is designed.

The problem of the study may be summarized as follows:

1- The real aim behind designing this course is neglected (legal communication). In other words, the considerations related to the legal language usage as a means of legal communication are ignored,

2- The aspects and terms in this ESP course have nothing to do with the learners' specialization or learners' future career, and

3- The current ESP course mentions nothing about the author. Furthermore, there is nothing mentioned about the

sources from which the course is constructed or the addressee to whom this course is directed.

Aims of the study

The study aims at:

- 1- evaluating the current ESP (namely General English Course) in the light of the students' needs in their specialization,
- 2- investigating the students' perceptions about the real obstacles they face in learning the current ESP course, and
- 3- identifying the student's need in terms of the language skills.

Significance of the Study

The present study is conducted to evaluate the "General English Course" which is an ESP course designed to teach the first year, law students at Alneelain University. The evaluation implies investigation about the functions that may serve the students' specialization, improving the four skills of the target language in terms of law in particular, and in their life in general.

In so, the study is significant to the ESP designer and the instructor. It is also significant to the Sudanese students at the first year, law students to serve their career

Hypotheses of the Study

The study hypothesized that:

- 1- the ESP course which is currently taught to the first year, College of Law, Alneelain University is irrelevant for the requirements of legal studies for the sake of legal communication,
- 2- it is uninteresting because it is mainly concerned with rules and grammatical forms,

3- it does nothing with the ability of the students' legal communication, and

4- learning the functions existed in this ESP course will not preserved in the mind of the students after their graduation to serve their career.

Limitation of the Study

The present study is limited to evaluate the (General English Course) which is an ESP course taught to the law students at the first year, College of Law, Alneelain University, during the academic year 2015-2016. This is to find out to which extent

the first year, law students, Alneelain University benefit from the current course in terms of legal aspects.

Instruments of the Study

1- **An interview:** conducted with the students of law at first year. This is to be acquainted with their attitudes towards their ESP course, and

2- **A questionnaire:** was designed and distributed to the same students to document their real problems they face which may affect their desire towards learning this ESP course (see appendix A).

Proposition

After the Second World War, the need for ESP courses, as a part of the process in the field of EFL or ESL application has been demanded because English became the main means of communication all over the world in different directions especially in terms of professions.

In its general meaning, the acronym ESP is an abbreviation of the phrase (English

for Specific Purposes). This means that the designing of any ESP course makes the learner from a certain specialization acquaints carefully with his specialization in English for the sake of worldly communication in that specialization. This means that it is based on the correspondence between the learner's aim he wants to achieve and the linguistic set which represent the communicative competence (AL-Azzawi 2005:13).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987- cited in Sha'lan:19) argue that designing a certain ESP programme matches a certain need demands much efforts from the designers by concentrating on a certain language depending on the learners' reason for English learning. As so different classes of ESP courses were emerged to fulfill the intended aim.

Classification of ESP programmes

Generally, Thiele (1996:33) classifies the ESP programmes as a medium of communication into two types;

First: Programmes used as a medium of communication among English speakers. This type is subdivided into the following:

a- ESP programme for Immigrants: this programme addresses the immigrant people who choose to change their place to live in other place with people speak English as a second Language. This programme supplies the learners with the required language and cultural proficiencies to the purpose of communication.

b- Technically Specialized ESP programme: this one addresses students of certain disciplines, regardless whether they are native speakers or non-native

speakers to make his get use to the English technical language or register required in their discipline.

c- Workplace ESP programme: this programme addresses a certain slice of workers whose English is second language. This programme helps him to improve their communication skill.

d- Humanitarian ESP programme: this type is used for humanitarian purposes. It is limited to those who work in human organizations.

Second: Programmes used as a medium of communication among Non-English speakers. This type of ESP programme is adopted all over the world where English is not their native nor second language. This type of ESP programme is adopted to teach English language to the learners according to their specializations in terms of law, policy, economy, trade, electric, computer, industry, agriculture.

Types of Evaluation

McDonald (2012:2) classified four types of evaluation, they are:

1-Formative vs. Summative Evaluation

Formative allows the curriculum to evolve throughout the educational process while summative occurs after teachers have taught the curriculum and determine if the curriculum was effective or not.

2-Goal-free vs. Goal-based Evaluation

In goal-free type the evaluator conducts the process of evaluation but he is neglects the curriculum's goals, whereas in goal-based the evaluator is fully aware to the intended outcomes.

3- Judicial Evaluation

The judicial evaluation model is similar to a court case, hence the name, a governing body is appointed made up of representatives selected from educators who are familiar with the curriculum under evaluation. The representatives are then divided into two groups. One group argues that the curriculum was effective, while the other group argues that the curriculum was ineffective.

4-Tridimensional Curriculum Evaluation Model

This type relies on three aspects: efficiency, effectiveness and acceptability. About efficiency if the quality was competent for learning, then teaching is relevant to the course. If the curriculum achieves its objectives then the curriculum is effective, if not then it is ineffective. Finally, if the curriculum is disliked by the students and educators, then it is unacceptable.

This type of evaluation will be adopted by in this study in order to find out to which extend the current curriculum (namely **General English Course**) is active in teaching the first year, law students in the light of the three aspects mentioned above (namely efficiency, effectiveness and acceptability).

The purposes behind Evaluation

It may be said that course designing is not the end of ESP as a part of global communication. A certain curriculum needs to be evaluated from time to time to make the course correspond the continuation of life changing in general and the continuation changing of educational means and objectives in terms of technology and methodology.

Leung (1991:14) states that evaluation is a necessary process of any curriculum designing, particularly in planning to achieve the learners' professional needs

and learner-centered programme. Whereas Elley (1989-cited in Leung 1991:15) stresses the important role of evaluation in education is to serve the intended objectives. He states that "if the quality of the educational programme is to be enhanced, and to avoid the following of the misleading band-wagons of the past, curriculum evaluation should be considered as an essential part of the enterprise of education."

Allen and Russell (1972:18) on their part state that curriculum must be subject to some form of evaluation in order to check the results in meeting the educational objectives already stated. Whereas Brown (1984, cited in Sha'lan) states that evaluation has to be exhaustive and contains all the elements in a programme.

In the light of the above discussion, it may be said that it is necessary to evaluate the ESP course in question. As so, this course will be checked from two dimensions: the contents and the method of presentation.

As for the content, the researcher agrees with Lee (2001:43) when he states that it is impossible to teach the learners everything they need to know in class, because of different aspects that hinder the process of teaching such as the limitation of time, the large number of students in small class, the lack of technologies, the competence of the instructor, the readiness of the students. The economic and the social status of the students are other reasons which may be added as learning hindering.

Specialists like (Porter 1976; Corbluth 1975; Hutchinson and Waters 1980-cited in Oladejo 1993:14) state that there is still an argumentation among the designers of a certain ESP course that

concerns a certain specialization. This indicates that supplying the content and the level of the ESP has its own effect on instructor's teaching and students' competence and performance. Carreon (1996:18) on his part, comments that the content of most ESP courses lack the natural relation with the students' background and the needs of the students' specialization level.

Oladejo (1993:13) focuses the importance of the factors which sum up the content that maintains the learners' competence and performance. As so, it may be said that it is very necessary to make the factor-content corresponds the learners specialization in order to raise the students' desire of acquainting their specialization in English.

As for presentation, it may be said that many approaches of teaching may be used due to the contents, educational position, psychological status, etc. to achieve the intended aims stated behind ESP course teaching.

Field procedures

1- Data collection from the Interview

It is already mentioned that the first year, law students, Alneelain University is the population of the study. The researcher entered the class of the students already mentioned; he found twenty students remain after the finishing of their lecture. These twenty students were chosen randomly to represent the sample of the study. The sample was interviewed and handed a copy from the interview card (see appendix A) to acquaint with their attitudes towards the content and the philosophy of teaching\learning this course.

It was 80% from the interviewed students said that they pay no much attention to the content of this text in the

class. They declared that it presented no new grammatical information because simply they learnt these contents during their secondary schools. They argued that relearning the rules of grammar cannot serve their law specialization. This argument indicates that this course is ineffective and ignores their real needs in terms of legal information.

The students were asked about the major problems they face in teaching\learning this course. 90% of them agreed that it is easy to understand its contents because it is mostly a matter of repetition. The students declared that they can listen and understand the materials but this course presents no opportunity for writing or speaking in English especially in legal specialization. Again this declaration indicates that this course does not regard the importance of improving the skills of language in terms of legal topic and content.

The sample was asked about part six from the current course which presents some legal terms with their definitions. The students commented that this presentation has nothing to do with oral practice in terms of listening and speaking skills. They declared that the only function they do is merely to memorize certain legal items and aspects only for the purpose of examination but not for the purpose of long time memorization. It can be confidently said that this ESP has nothing to do in obtaining the career's knowledge.

As for the method and the style of the instructor in teaching; it was 90% of them confidently answered that the defect is not with the instructor nor with his style but it is with the course itself. They confirmed that this course is almost restricted to some pure English grammatical properties.

2- Data Collection from the Questionnaire

The sample was handed a copy from the questionnaire and instructed how to answer the items of it whenever it was needed (see appendix B).

Items No. 4 and 5 from the questionnaire allow the students to offer their opinion towards English in general and their ESP course in practical. The obtained data revealed that 70% (14 students) of them said that it is necessary to learn English in general, but to the contrary 90% (18 students) preferred this course to be changed because it is boring.

Item No. 6 from the questionnaire allows the students to rate themselves in English according to the current ESP course. The rating scale comprised five levels (bad/ acceptable/ middle/ good and very good). The obtained data revealed that 80% (16 students) from the students chose level three i.e. middle.

Whereas item No. 7 reveals the students' self-rating about their proficiency in language skills in terms of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The data revealed that 80% (16 students) rated themselves as listeners, while 10% (2 students) rated themselves as good readers, while 5% (1 student) rated himself as a good writer. Also 5% (1 student) rated himself as a speaker.

The researcher agrees with Kraemer's belief when he said: "students having more experience with learning the language, have greater variable of success and failure and are more objective in their evaluations" (Kraemer et al. 1989: 3). Accordingly, this rating is acceptable.

About the activities in classroom, item No. 8 revealed that 80% from the students prefer to be a listener rather

than participant. As for the style and method of the instructor in teaching the current course, item No.9 revealed that 20% (4 students) had no objection towards the instructor's present style and method because this classical style kept them away from embarrassment by committing mistakes when they shared in some activities. While item No. 10 revealed that 100% (20 students) prefer using technology in learning English.

As for the difficulties, item No.11 revealed that 95% (19 students) documented that their problem was with the legal items existed in the last part from this course. It may be inferred that their problem was in memorizing the legal items in this course. It may be said that this problem made the course a boring and uninterested course.

As for the students' attitudes towards examination, item No.12 revealed that 90% (18 students) had chosen the first level, i.e. afraid. They declared that they were and still afraid of English examination in spite of the efforts they exert in preparing themselves to the examination. Their fairness may be ascribed to the lack of their self-confidence due to this passive and uninteresting course.

Finally, about the contents to be presented in form of legal passages instead of the current form, it was 90% (18 students) agreed. In fact they strongly criticized the current passages because it can do nothing in improving their specialization in English. Again, due to the obtained data, the four hypotheses of the study are confirmed.

Conclusions

In the light of the above analyzed data, it may be said that the current ESP course was not designed to be used as ESP course to teach English language in

terms of law to the first year students because basically it cannot achieve the global communication in terms of law which is the main objective to which the ESP course supposed to do. This is one of the most defects of this course that made it passive and uninteresting course. Moreover it imposes only one approach of teaching in which the instructor is the only person in the classroom who is responsible about everything neglecting the important role of the students in learning.

Furthermore, the contents of this course are presented in a boring and unattractive presentation because simply the contents are a matter of repetition. This style of input affected negatively the students output in terms of law.

It is noticeable that the contents present no points to be discussed for the purpose of speaking skill development in the class nor it presents any active demands the student to write any paragraph or essay outside the classroom for the purpose of writing skill development in terms of law.

Another noticeable point is that there is no any motivation in this course to motivate the students to learn themselves outside the class. It can be inferred that the student totally depends on the instructor to solve the problems of this course. Moreover the current ESP course does not present any chance to use the modern style in teaching by using the technology as a visual or oral aid means. Finally, it may be said that the designer of this curriculum focused only on English as a Foreign Language Teaching and Learning rather than on the criteria of ESP course which are an important part in the field of English teaching/learning of a certain specialization.

In brief, conclusions may summarized in the following points:

1- this course presents no balanced information. It is basically prepared to teach English grammar rather than law specialization to achieve the global legal communication,

2- it is a passive and boring course because it presents no legal activities or legal exercises to motivate the student to think about it in English,

3- the approach of presenting the contents of this course is instructor-centered not learner-centered. By this it conflicts the modern trends in teaching, and

4- the current ESP course does not present any chance to use the modern style in teaching by using the technology as a visual or oral aid means simply because it is mostly a matter of grammatical presentation.

Recommendations

Due to the above mentioned reasons, it may be recommend the specialists to design objectively an alternative text instead of the current passive one. It may be said that the Sudanese students in general do not use English except in classroom, so designing a new course would be the most difficult part of this process in counting the students' community cultural, starting point depending on student's background and actual needs in terms of academically and futurity specialization concepts serving their career.

Accordingly, the researcher acquainted with all the materials of the first year law students at Alneelain University taught in Arabic that concern their specialization. He interested with a material entitled (المدخل للعلوم القانونية - لمؤلفه أ.د. محمد الشيخ عمر/2014) This

material contents different basic legal aspects and different theories and foundations of law. In other words, this material comprises of a very suitable knowledge to be presented in terms of ESP.

It may be argued that it would be very suitable if this precisely specialized educational subject is first summarized and then translated into English to be depended as ESP course. And it would be much better to be modified by adding some grammatical aspects for the sake of memorizing. This method in designing the alternative course is of importance in presenting in English the same legal aspects that are presented in Arabic.

In this sense, the students' legal knowledge will be reinforced by studying twice the same material (المدخل للعلوم القانونية) (An Entrance to the Legal Sciences). It can be said that the students get duplicated information about the same legal aspect; once in Arabic and another is in English. Again in this sense, the students will memorize the matched information for long time even after their graduation not only for the purpose of examination.

Suggestions

The researcher suggest other studies to be conducted to evaluate other ESP courses used different departments at different colleges in Sudan Universities, such as ESP course designed to Sport College, Military College, Police College, Trade College, and others.

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