



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ESAP (ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC ACADEMIC PURPOSE) NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR SUBJECT INSTRUCTORS IN ENGINEERING FACULTY (ISHIK UNIVERSITY, IRAQI CASE)

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Abstract

This research reports on a survey study of 48 subject instructors, assistants, and lab assistants in engineering faculty at Ishik University in Iraq about their opinions and attitudes toward ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purpose) and ESAP related issues. The instrument used for the survey is a self-made questionnaire based on literature review. Since ESAP is driven by the specific learning needs of the language learner, the first step for ESAP course design is distinguishing the specific needs of the Subject instructors and students which will tell us the dynamics about our ESAP program. The study showed us that the effect of Advanced English to comprehend subject field courses will be limited in Engineering Faculty. On the contrary students should be provided with ESAP courses that will result in better comprehension of their subject field courses.

Key Words: ESP, ESAP, Needs analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The term needs analysis generally refers to the activities that are involved in collecting information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the needs of a particular group of students (Iwai, T., Kondo, K., Limm, S. J. D., Ray, E. G., Shimizu, H., Brown, J. D., 1999). As English is widely acknowledged as the “lingua franca” in different areas of university collages and professions globally, many learners of English want to learn the language specifically in their particular fields. As a result, the need for ESP (English for specific purposes) is increasing enormously, especially in EFL countries where English is used for instrumental purposes. In response to the great necessity for English in academic, vocational and professional contexts, many universities in Iraq are now offering a variety of ESP courses focusing on different departments for students to study.

Many ESP trainers and subject instructors, believe that the most pressing challenge faced by their students is poor specific linguistic knowledge, which is a difficult obstacle in their professional subjects. The conclusion is that many existing ESP courses in Iraq are still language-based. The syllabuses are generally,

concerned with verbal communication and that is usually because of lack of time and large class sizes and also there is little chance for students to practice their knowledge of English.

Therefore, this study investigates how Engineering faculty and its subject instructors perceive ESAP courses in an EFL setting. To be more specific, this research attempted to compare and contrast ESP instructors-Subject instructors in engineering faculty while obtaining answers to the following questions:

How do Subject instructors and ESP teachers view ESAP as compared with GE?

Is Engineering Faculty subject Instructors and students of Ishik University ready for ESAP Instruction?

Necessity of needs analysis from perspectives of subject instructors in engineering faculty

What are the potential problems facing ESAP?

DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ESP (English for specific purpose), ESAP (English for specific academic purpose)

As a result of huge and unpredicted expansion in scientific, technical and economic development on an international scale after the Second World War, the necessity of ESP was triggered by the demands of "Brave new world". The term ESP (English for Specific Purposes) came in to life in 1950s and 1960s. However, ESP became more popular and vital for the teaching of English in the 1970s. This is because before 1970s, ESP was dominated by the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP); most of the materials produced, the course descriptions written and the research carried out were in the area of English for Academic Purposes (Dudley-Evans, T., St John, M.J., 1998).

ESP can be specified as the teaching of English for academic studies, or for vocational or professional purposes. We also have such acronyms as ESAP (English for specific academic purposes), EOP (English for occupational purposes), ENP (English for nursing purposes), EMP (English for medical purposes), EBP (English for business purposes) and EST (English for science and technology).

English for academic purposes (EAP) is concerned with researching and teaching the English needed by those who use the language to perform academic tasks. The field originally arose out of the wider area of English for specific purposes (ESP) and over the last two decades has increased enormously in importance, driven by the global growth in the use of English for employment, as well as academic research. (B.Paltridge, S. Staefield, 2013).

English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) was improved for two main reasons: 1. to help international students reach their full academic needs and potential (Dudley-Evans, T., St John, M.J., 1998), 2. To expose these students to the expectations and requirements of the faculties in terms of target situation needs and academic culture (Jordan, 1997).

ESP has a number of characteristics which distinguish itself from GE (General English). Dudley-Evans and St. John offered a modified definition of absolute and variable characteristics of ESP:

Absolute Characteristics

- ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learner;
- ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves;
- ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

Variable Characteristics

- ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
- ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
- ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level;
- ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students;



- Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners

NEEDS ANALYSIS

Since ESAP is driven by the specific learning needs of the language learner, the first step for ESAP course design is distinguishing the specific needs of the Subject field instructors and students which will tell us the plans we make about our ESAP program. ESAP needs analysis is essential to identify academic needs before designing a language course.

Needs analysis has a dynamic role in the process of designing and carrying out any language course, whether it is English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or general English course, and its significance has been emphasized by several scholars and authors (Mumby, 1978) (Hutchinson, T., Waters, A., 1987). According to (Iwai, T., Kondo, K., Limm, S. J. D., Ray, E. G., Shimizu, H., Brown, J. D., 1999), the term needs analysis generally refers to the activities that are involved in collecting information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the needs of a particular group of students.

It has been indicated that ESP teachers and learners have their own needs and demands but at university level, subject field instructors' needs and demands should be taken in to consideration as well.

NECESSITY OF ESAP (English for specific academic purpose) FROM PERSPECTIVES OF SUBJECT INSTRUCTORS AT ENGINEERING FACULTY

EAP attempts to offer systematic, locally managed solution-oriented approaches that address the pervasive and endemic challenges posed by academic study to a diverse student body by focusing on student needs and discipline-specific communication skills (Hylend, 2006). The effect of Advanced English to comprehend subject field courses will be limited in Engineering Faculty. On the contrary students should be provided with ESAP courses that will result in better comprehension of their subject field courses.

Rather than ESAP courses, engineering faculty first year students are taught Advanced English which aims at developing their language skills. And consequently first year students' comprehensions of main field courses are ignored. For that reason ESAP courses are significant in that they will enable students to promote their subject field knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

Since every situation is not similar, there is no single way to needs analysis in English language. 'The main instruments for executing needs analysis study are questionnaire, analysis of authentic spoken and written texts, discussions, structured interviews, observations and assessments' (Robinson, 1991). In this descriptive study I used a survey questionnaire, which was prepared by me as a needs analysis instrument.

The Participants

Participants involved in this study include 48 subject instructors, assistants, and lab assistants. The questionnaire took place at Ishik University where English is used as educational language. The participants involved in this questionnaire consist of subject lecturers, who are teaching at engineering faculty of Ishik University.

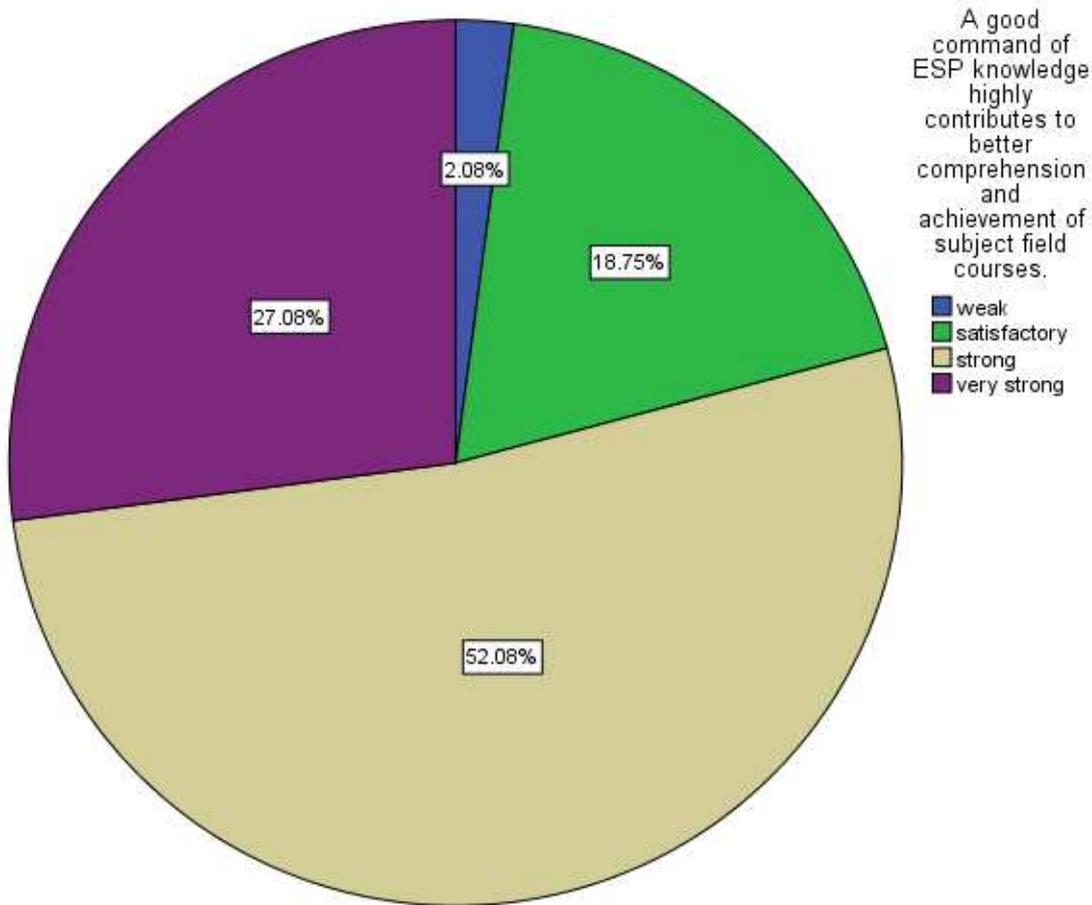
Data Collection

In this research a survey questionnaire is used to collect the data, because it seemed to be the most relevant tool for collecting the views and demands of the subject lecturers. The questionnaire was distributed to subject instructors, assistants, and lab assistants who are teaching at engineering faculty of Ishik University in Iraq.

Data Analysis

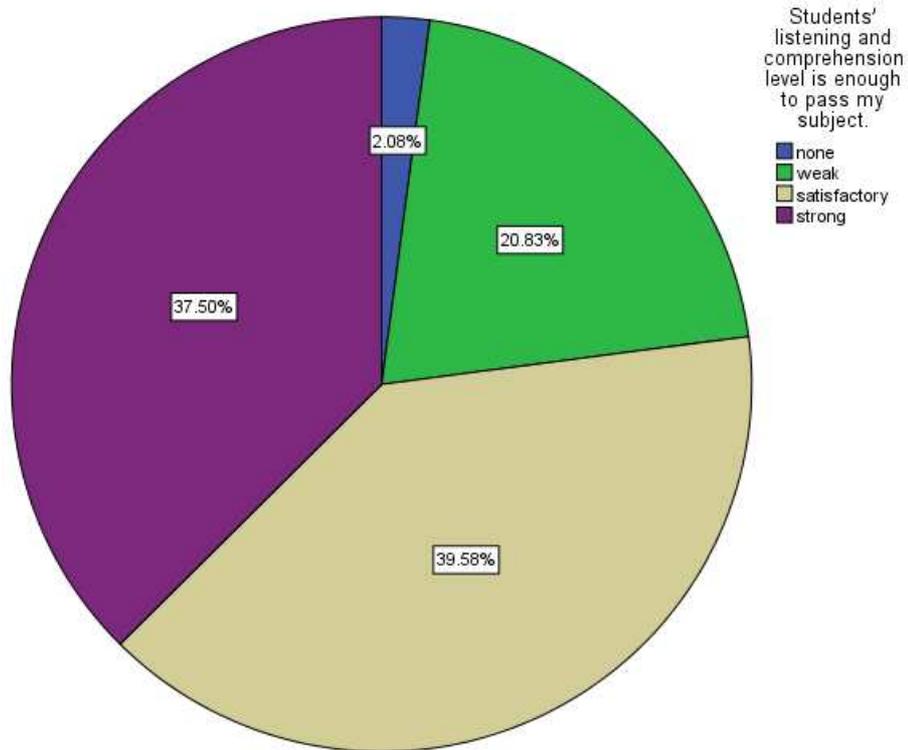
The participants' responses in the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics from the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequency and percentage counts were considered for data analysis.

FINDINGS

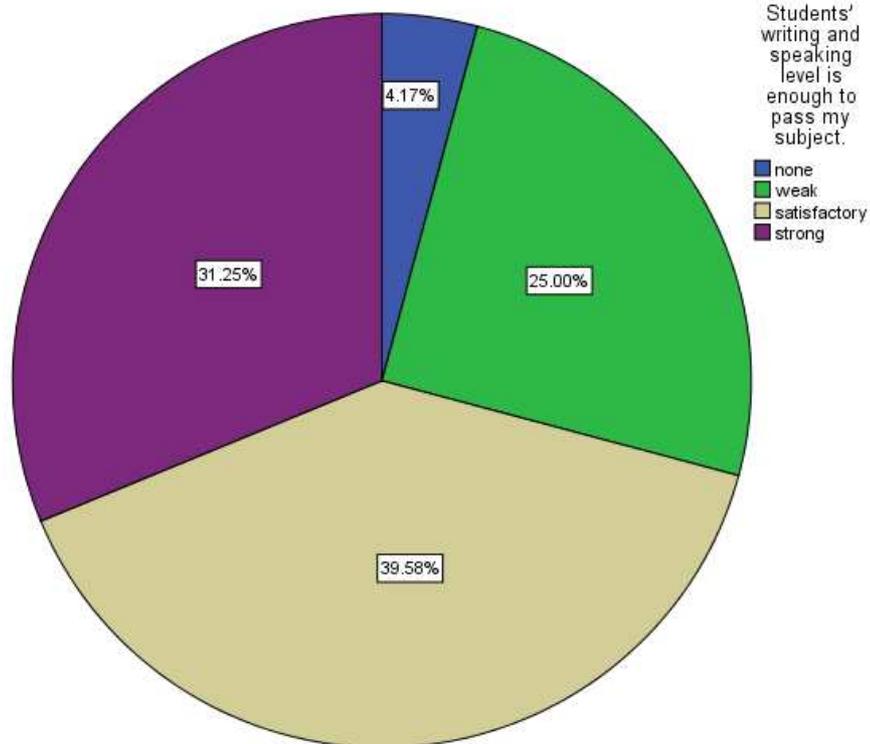


Graphic 1: The influence of ESP knowledge on subject field courses comprehension

The percentage of lectures that have strong opinions about the contributions of ESP knowledge on better comprehension of subject field courses is % 27.08. Moreover, % 97.91 of the lecturers is of the opinion that a good command of ESP knowledge highly affects learners' understanding subject field courses. Therefore, it can be concluded that mastering ESP holds an important place in better comprehension of courses. In other words without adequate knowledge of ESP learners will have great difficulty in grasping their courses that are presented in English.

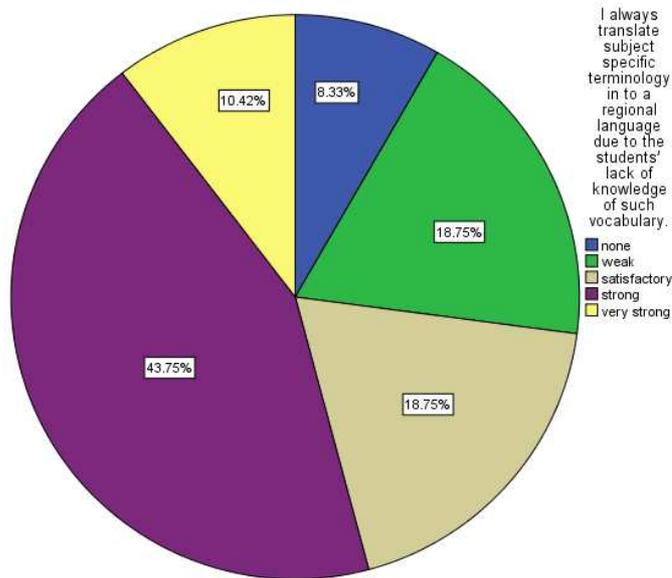


Graphic 2: Students' General English listening and comprehension level



Graphic 3: Students' General English writing and speaking level

As shown in Graphic 2 and Graphic 3 vast majorities of the subject lecturers (% 73.9) find their students' GE level satisfactory or more. On the other hand %26.1 of lecturers agrees that their students' even GE level is not satisfactory to comprehend their lessons.



Graphic 4: The Importance of Learning 'Specific Technical Vocabulary' for Academic Purposes

In Graphic 4, a majority of the lecturers (72.9%) responded that their students needed to learn 'specific technical vocabulary' to better comprehension in the field of engineering. Only % 8.33 of lecturers responded that their students did not need to learn 'specific technical vocabulary'. This table has revealed that 'specific technical vocabulary' is a big need in comprehension of subject lessons.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study revealed that ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purpose) is strongly needed for the undergraduate students of engineering faculty at Ishik University of Iraq. The survey revealed important information about the students' ESP knowledge in their main field subjects. Applying an academic needs analysis has a vital role in the identification and analysis of needs for any educational institution.

The findings of the study can support the ESP teachers design ESAP course for the undergraduate students. The research may also be useful to the students that they could realize their strengths and weaknesses in ESAP.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey has been design to help Subject Instructors and ESP teachers to search out the real needs and lacks of Engineering Faculty students in English Language at Ishik University. Please, think about your most recent lecture experiences while you read the questionnaire.

Subject Names : 1. _____
2. _____ 3. _____
4. _____ 5. _____

Answer the questions below by circling the value of 1-5

1- None 2- Weak 3- Satisfactory 4- Strong 5- Very strong

1. A good command of ESP knowledge highly contributes to better comprehension and achievement of subject field courses.
1- None 2- Weak 3- Satisfactory 4- Strong 5- Very strong
2. Students' listening and comprehension level is enough to pass my subject.
1- None 2- Weak 3- Satisfactory 4- Strong 5- Very strong
3. Students' writing and speaking level is enough to pass my subject.
1- None 2- Weak 3- Satisfactory 4- Strong 5- Very strong
4. Students' subject field terminology knowledge is enough to pass my subject.
1- None 2- Weak 3- Satisfactory 4- Strong 5- Very strong
5. Students can easily express themselves on subject field topics.
1- None 2- Weak 3- Satisfactory 4- Strong 5- Very strong
6. Students can easily put their ideas into paper on subject field topics.
1- None 2- Weak 3- Satisfactory 4- Strong 5- Very strong
7. I always translate subject specific terminology in to a regional language due to the students' lack of knowledge of such vocabulary.
1- None 2- Weak 3- Satisfactory 4- Strong 5- Very strong
8. In my subject my students feel comfortable in the use of English language.
1- None 2- Weak 3- Satisfactory 4- Strong 5- Very strong
9. Students can easily make PowerPoint presentations in my lectures.
1- None 2- Weak 3- Satisfactory 4- Strong 5- Very strong
10. Students are enthusiastic and motivated when we have discussions in my lectures.
1- None 2- Weak 3- Satisfactory 4- Strong 5- Very strong