

## **Investigating of ESP Vocabulary Difficulties Encountered by EFL Learners**

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### **Abstract**

This paper attempts to investigate the ESP vocabulary problems which face the EFL learners and to facilitate the learning of ESP courses. The study also investigates the actual difficulty which faces the ESP teachers in the teaching process. To investigate these difficulties, the researcher assumes that firstly, the ESP specialized vocabulary may create some problems to EFL learners. Secondly, the ESP courses may solve these difficulties, and thirdly, these difficulties of the specialized vocabulary affect student`s progress.

The researcher uses the descriptive analytical method, statistical package for social science (SPSS), and the data of this study was collected through teachers` questionnaire. To confirm or to reject these hypotheses, the researcher uses a teachers` questionnaire in three universities: Sudan University of Science and Technology, Omdurman Islamic University and Elahfad University in Khartoum State which represent all universities in Sudan. The study arrived at: the fact that ESP specialized vocabulary creates some problems to EFL learners, the ESP courses do not meet students` needs, and these difficulties affect the students` progress. The study also arrived at that the ESP teachers need more training.

According to what was mentioned above, The ESP teachers should teach the ESP vocabulary in context rather than teaching it in separate lists. To cope with ESP vocabulary, there are many recommendations:. ESP teachers should cooperate with the subject teachers in designing courses and selecting materials. ESP courses should concentrate on ESP vocabulary in order to enhance the subject. It would be better to increase

the teaching hours of ESP courses. The objectives of ESP courses should be clear for both students and teachers. To help the students to comprehend the ESP courses, it is important to give them pre-courses in English language learning. It is very important to give some activities and ESP tasks inside the class. The universities should provide the ESP teachers with regular training. ESP courses should be revised from time to time. It is better to construct a system to evaluate the performance of ESP

## المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة لتقصي صعوبات مفردات اللغة الانجليزية لاغراض محددة" خاصة "وتلك المشاكل التي تواجه الطلاب مستخدمى اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية. ولتقصي هذه الصعوبات قام الباحث بافتراض ثلاث فرضيات : الفرضية الاولى تقول ان تلك المفردات الخاصة تخلق بعض الصعوبات لمستخدمى اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية. الفرضية الثانية تقول ان مقررات اللغة الانجليزية لاغراض خاصة يمكن ان تحل المشكلة . اما الفرضية الثالثة فتقول ان هذه الصعوبات تعيق تقدم الطلاب فى الدراسة. استخدم الباحث المنهج الوصفى والحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS) لتحليل البيانات. تتكون عينة الدراسة من ثلاثين معلما يدرسون مقررات اللغة الانجليزية لاغراض خاصة. لقبول ارفض هذه الفرضيات استخدم الباحث استبيان للاساتذة الذين يدرسون مقررات اللغة الانجليزية لاغراض خاصة فى ثلاث جامعات سودانية هى: جامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا , جامعة ام درمان الاسلامية وجامعة الاحفاد. وقد خلصت الدراسة الى ان المفردات الخاصة تشكل بعض الصعوبات لدارسى اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية وان المقررات التي تدرس فى الجامعات لا تلبى تلك الاحتياجات. كذلك امتد الامر الى انه توجد بعض الصعوبات التي تواجه الطلاب خاصة التعامل مع تلك المفردات من حيث الاستخدام او الفهم . عليه وبعد التحليل والمناقشة توصلت الدراسة الى الاتى : من المفيد ان تدرس المفردات الخاصة فى شكل نص بدلا من تدريسها فى قائمة مفردات منفصلة. كذلك لا بد من تطوير ومراجعة مقررات اللغة الانجليزية لاغراض خاصة لتقابل احتياجات الطلاب الخاصة. وللتعامل مع مفردات اللغة الانجليزية لاغراض خاصة هناك عدة توصيات: يجب ان يتعاون مدرس المادة مع مدرس اللغة الانجليزية لاغراض خاصة فى تصميم المقررات واختيار المواد. مقررات اللغة الانجليزية لاغراض خاصة يجب ان تركز على المفردات لاغراض خاصة لتوصيل المادة وسهولة فهمها. من المفيد زيادة ساعات مقررات اللغة الانجليزية لاغراض خاصة. اهداف مقررات اللغة الانجليزية لاغراض خاصة يجب ان تكون واضحة ومحددة. من المفيد اعطاء الطلاب مقررات او تدريبات تمهيدية قبل بداية الدراسة. من المفيد اعطاء الطلاب بعض النشاطات والتدريبات داخل حجرة الدراسة. على الجامعات تزويد الاساتذة بالتدريبات اللازمة. مقررات اللغة الانجليزية لاغراض خاصة يجب ان تراجع من وقت لآخر. من المفيد انشاء نظام لتقييم اداء الاساتذة.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background :

No doubt English is considered the first language all over the world. That is because of the wide spread of the tools of communication such as radio, television, internet, books, and magazines. So English has become the language of business and technology. By the end of the second world War in 1945, the United States dominated the world by its two forces, technology and commerce which are generated and demanded an international language. So English for specific purposes (ESP) emerged to face the specific needs of people in specific fields such as medicine, agriculture, engineering , trade and business.(Hutchinson and waters, 1987: 96).

In this research, the researcher thinks that the ESP vocabulary problems are the main problems which face the students who learn English as second language (ESL).Hence, the specialized vocabulary which belongs to Latin can create some difficulties to the (EFL) learners, also the various meanings which exist in dictionary will caused some problems such as how to select appropriate and suitable meaning of any item.

Furthermore, English for specific purposes (ESP) is still new to many students. For that reason the research also aims to explain ESP as a part of English language teaching and to introduce various activities aimed at reading, writing, and vocabulary.

The (ESP) language is not a special language which is different from that in general English. It is rather a matter of relative emphasis on certain elements and aspects of the language to meet the needs of ESP learners in a particular situation such as specialized vocabulary in Accounting , Agriculture, and Medicine. One of the

linguistic problems of ESP teachers /learners is how to cope with technical and specialized lexis.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problems:**

The problem of this research could be stated on the fact that the EFL learners are suffering from knowing the meaning and how to deal with some vocabulary which has no direct translation in their own languages. So this difficulty brings many problems concerned with understanding and analyzing this vocabulary in order to be used successfully. Students are also studying most of their subject-matter through English language and that most of the references are only available in English. In addition to, students are required to understand lectures, take notes, extract information from references and to write accurate definitions and terms in their final exams. For all that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is very important in specific fields.

### **1.3 Research Questions:**

This research attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1- Does the ESP specialized vocabulary create some problems to EFL learners. ?
- 2- Can the ESP courses solve the problems of the specialized vocabulary?
- 3- To what extent does difficulty of specialized vocabulary affect the student's progress in the study?

### **1.4 Hypotheses:**

To investigate the specialized vocabulary problems, there are three assumptions:

- 1- The specialized vocabulary creates some problems to EFL learners.

- 2- The ESP courses solve the problems.
- 3- The specialized vocabulary affects the student`s progress.

### **1.5 Objectives of the Study:**

This research aims to:

- 1- Identify, describe, and produce an analysis of the ESP specialized vocabulary.
- 2- Help the EFL learners to overcome the problems of the specialized vocabulary.
- 3- Provide the theoretical framework of ESP specialized vocabulary

### **1.6 Significance of the Study:**

Studying a subject in foreign language can create some problems to anyone. For this reason the research aims to explain, and identify the nature of the ESP specialized vocabulary. So this study is very important, especially for the ESP learners.

### **1.7 Limits of The Study:**

The research is prepared to be done in the fields of the ESP vocabulary for the EFL learners in: Sudan University of Science and Technology, Omdurman Islamic University and Elahfad University in Khartoum State which represent all universities in Sudan. The subjects of this study are the ESP teachers.

### **1.8 Research Methodology:**

The researcher will use the descriptive analytical method, and the data of this study will be collected through teachers' questionnaire (30 ESP teachers) and then it will be analyzed and discussed.

## **LITERRATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1Introduction:**

This chapter presents a general view of English for specific purposes (ESP). It attempts to build a conceptual background of ESP by giving definitions, outline of ESP theories, types of ESP, features and characteristics of ESP, curriculum and syllabus, the specialized vocabulary, English for Specific Purposes versus General English, the role of ESP teacher, selecting materials and approaches to course design.

## **2.2 What is ESP:**

The definitions of ESP are numerous; the concept is being fluid enough to support numbers of interpretations. ESP is a term that refers to teaching and studying English for a particular career (like law, medicine), or for business in general. There is specific reason for which English is learned. Robinson (1989:398) describes ESP as a type of English language teaching (ELT) and defines it as “goal oriented language learning”. That means the students has specific goal which is going to be attained. However, Hutchinson and Watters (1987:9) consider ESP as “an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on learners` reason for learning”. But according to Yassin (2013:1) ESP is “interdisciplinary area of enquiry”. Also Striven (1980:109) states that “ a definition of ESP that is both simple and watertight is not easy to produce”.

As a matter of fact, ESP combines subject matter and English language teaching. Such a combination is highly motivating because students are able to apply what they learn in their English classes to their main field of study, whatever it would be; Accounting, Economics, Computer Science, Agriculture, Medicine or Tourism.

## **2.3 Historical Background of ESP:**

The idea of ESP has been available since 1960s. However, the concept of directing language teaching to specific aims goes back

beyond that date (Hutchinson and Watters, 1987). After the end of the Second World War in 1945, there was expansion in technology and commerce, so there was a great demand for an international language. For various reasons, the economic power of the United States in the post world war generated a whole new mass of people wanting to learn English not for pleasure but because English became the language of technology. Hutchinson and Watters (1989:6) state “the effect was to create a whole new mass of people wanting to learn English, not for the pleasure or prestige of knowing the language, but because English was the key to the international currencies of technology”. But as English has become the accepted international language of technology and commerce, it creates a new generation of learners who know specifically why they are learning language. Business men and women who wanted to sell their products , doctors who needed to keep up with developments in their fields and a whole range of students whose course of study included textbooks and journals only available in English.

According to Hutchinson and Watters (1987:9), there are three reasons common to the emergence of all ESP:

1. The demand of brave new world.
2. A revolution in linguistics.
3. Focus on the learners.

ESP developed at different speeds in different countries (ibid). This development actually has taken place through five stages:

1. The concept of special language: register analysis.
2. Beyond the sentences rhetorical or discourse analysis.
3. Target situation analysis / needs analysis.
4. Skills strategies.
5. A learning-centered approach.

The focus should rather be on the underlying interpretive strategies, which enable the learner to cope with the surface, for example, guessing the meaning of words from context and using visual layout to determine the type of text.

In this direction, Widowson (1983:6) defines ESP as “an essential training operation which seeks to provide learners with a restricted competence to enable them to cope with certain clearly defined purposes, which the ESP course is designed to meet”.

Finally, one can conclude that it is not an easy task to produce a simple definition of ESP, i.e. the very specificity of purposes in ESP shows that what is specific to one group of one language learners at a certain place might not be specific to another group elsewhere.

### **2.5 Types of ESP:**

Many scholars seem disagree of the types of ESP as can be shown below. Carter quotes in Gatehouse (2001:7), identifies three types of ESP:

1. English as a restricted language.
2. English for Academic and Occupational Purposes.
3. English for Specific Topics.

Carter as quoted in Gatehouse (2001:8) categorizes EAP and EOP under the same type of ESP. It appears that Carter implies the end purpose of both EAP and EOP is one and same at last “employment”. Although the end purpose is being identical, EAP and EOP are different terms of kind of language focus on the final type of ESP which identified by Carter is English for specific topics. Carter notes that it is only in this type the emphasis shifts from purpose to topic. This type of ESP uniquely concerns with anticipated future English needs, for example students requiring English for postgraduate studies, scientists attending conferences or working in foreign institutions.

He also argues that “this is not a separate type of ESP, rather, it is an integral component comes or program which focus on situational language used target work place settings”.(ibid:6).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 16) identify two types which contrast with Carters three types. Their classification is based on whether the learner uses English for academic purposes, or for work and training. It is possible to distinguish ESP courts by the general nature of the learner's specialty. Therefore, three categories are usually identified in this connection:

- 1- English for science and technology (EST).
- 2- English for Business and Economics (EBE).
- 3- English for Social Sciences (ESS).

In this respect two main branches of ESP will be discussed with some more details.

### **2.5.1 English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) :**

English language has become a necessary tool in obtaining a job, getting promoted and performing effectively in the working field. English for occupational purposes had logically come about as a result of the development in the linguistic field. Registers such as English for pilots, English for doctors, English for bank employees are branches of EOP. The main aim of EOP is more general compared to ESP because it does not focus on the specific job disciplines, but on the more general required by the students in order to prepare them for the wor

### **2.5.2 English for Academic Purposes (EAP):**

Recently, there has been a development in English language teaching methods. It is widely understood that the communication- based approaches to language teaching pay attention to learners' problems need

English to continue their studies particularly in the field of science and technology. This need for English leads to the emergence of the EAP. According to Flower Dew and Peacock (2001: 8), the teaching of English with specific aim of helping learners to study, conduct research, or teach that language is an international extent scope. This accounts for the large number of ESP activities. Thus EAP is the most growing ESP branch.

## **2.6 Features and Characteristics of ESP:**

The first step towards understanding the identifying and roles of ESP is to view it as a development within the field of ELT as it is considered by Kennedy and Bolitho (1984). But the important thing here is what are the characteristics features of ESP to meet specific needs of the target situation. Yassin (2013:1) states:

1. ESP is taught as a means to an end for clearly defined aims where English is called upon to play an auxiliary role to enable the language learners to communicate in the target situation. It is an instrumental role.
2. ESP is closely linked with the target specialist of the learner.
3. ESP is based on the learners' needs analysis, i.e. what exactly the learner needs English for. Needs also exist in GPE but they are not accurately specified. So, it is the specialty of the learners' needs which is based on rigorous analysis that distinguishes ESP from GPE.
4. ESP like itself closely with learner centered approach.
5. ESP learners are often adults or near adults.

6. ESP learners often have high motivation (relevance of the course to their communication needs).
7. ESP courses are often taught under pressure of time thus, all arrangements and activities are done with this factor in mind.
8. Accountability is an important feature to ESP. The ESP practitioner is more accountable to the client than GPE teachers. The ultimate aim is the achievement of a specific purpose.
9. Communicating is desirable in GPE but it is a must in ESP.
10. Writing materials to meet the specific purposes become an important component of ESP activities. Much time of ESP teachers is taking in materials writing.
11. Teaching study skills (e.g. reading skills) are more important in ESP.
12. ESP teaching materials are often taken from the learners' specifying (they enhance comprehension and motivation).

The above characteristics and features are not confined to ESP to exclusion of GPE but they are necessary more essential in ESP which may share a lot with EPE.

According to Robinson (1980, 9), "English for special language, i.e. restricted language ... whereas English for specific purposes focuses attention on the purpose of the learner and refers to the whole range of resources". That means ESP has a purposefulness goal.

### **2.12 What is Specialized Vocabulary?**

To specialize – is to narrow down your focus in your studies or profession, to a specific field such as medicine, agriculture, or accounting. And vocabulary means all the words that a person knows or

uses. As for ESP specialized vocabulary and according to Yassin (2013:2), there are three levels:

### **2.12.1 Technical Vocabulary:**

This refers to words which rarely occur in other fields, e.g. photosynthesis (science). They are internationally used. This level of vocabulary is a responsibility of the specialist subject teacher.

In this respect, the ESP teacher can seek the cooperation of the subject teachers.

### **2.12.2 Semi Technical /sub- technical Vocabulary:**

This refers to words which are not specific to specialist but occur in scientific texts /fields (gross profit cash flow ...).

### **2.12.3 General Vocabulary :**

It refers to words which are used in daily life, and which are not included in (1) and (2) which are concerned with ESP teacher.

To cope with ESP specialized vocabulary there are many techniques and strategies:

- 1- Words information (prefixes – rout- suffixes).
- 2- Technical abbreviations-(AC Account)
- 3- Symbols & formulators. (Dr& CR for debit & credit).
- 4- Relationships between words.

In short, ESP specialized vocabulary is very important, specially for a business man who might need to understand effectively with sales conferences or to get necessary information from sales catalogues and so on.

The ESP learners also need to know the linguistic features, discourse, function, structure, and lexis which are commonly used in target situation. So the expression of "tell me what you need English for, I will tell you the English that you need", becomes the guiding principle of ESP, as Hutchinson and Waters (1992) point out.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction:**

This chapter focuses on the methodology of the study, highlighting the steps taken in collecting the data, to be specific; it provides description of the sample on which the analysis is based, the data collection instrument, procedures and the data presentation. It also evaluates the reliability, validity of the data collection instrument and statistical analysis of the data.

### **3.2Method:**

The instrument which is used in the study, is the ESP teachers` questionnaire constructed by the researcher himself in order to investigate his target situation (see appendix 1), after it has been revised by experts. The researcher also used the descriptive analytical method and Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to analyze his data.

#### **3.2.1Population**

Table (3.1) below shows the distribution of the target population.

**Table (3.1) the target population**

University	ESP teachers(subjects)
Sudan University of Science and Technology	15
Omdurman Islamic University	10
Elahfad University	5
Total	30

**3.2.2 The Subjects:**

The subjects who participated in the study were drawn from three universities , Sudan University of Science and Technology, Omdurman Islamic University, Elahfad University which are all located in Khartoum State represented all universities in Sudan. They were all ESP teachers. The researcher chose a narrow number of the ESP teachers supposed to be aware of the ESP specialized vocabulary problems encountered by EFL learners .The researcher also visited the subjects in their different parts of their works before investigation in order to develop a good relation with them.

**3.2.3 The Procedures:**

Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher briefly informed the subjects about the purpose of the study, telling them that their information will be treated confidentially, and would not be used for any other purpose.

**3.2.4 Data Collection Instrument:**

The data collection instrument is a questionnaire of ESP teachers (30 teachers) supposed to be aware of ESP vocabulary problems. It consists of 15 items. See (appendix).

### 3.3 Validity and Reliability:

To ensure validity and reliability of the tool (questionnaire), the researcher consulted his supervisor and several experts in the field of teaching and statistics, whose opinions helped the researcher to reach the final copy of the questionnaire, so some statements were omitted, other were added or adapted. The researcher also addressed the reliability by comparing the frequency and the percentage of piloting analysis with experiment analysis results of data collection, the similarity was there. Below is the statistic reliability which was gained electronically:

Statistic Reliability is: .9788-.9756=. 212

Probability = .

#### Parameter Estimates

Estimated common variance = 26.4333

Error variance = 10.5548

True variance = 15.8786

Estimated common inter-item correlation = .6007

Estimated reliability of scale = .9576

Unbiased estimate of reliability = .9788

#### RELIABILITY ANALYSIS - SCALE (PARALLEL

EL

Statistics based on inverse matrix for scale PARALLEL are meaningless and printed as .

N of Cases = 5.0

Item Variances	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min
Variance	26.4333	8.5000	69.5000	61.0000	8.1765 248.4595

## **CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES**

### **5.1 Introduction:**

This section presents:

Conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

### **5.2 Summary and Conclusions:**

This study was an attempt to investigate the ESP vocabulary specialized problems which facing the EFL learners in their study and to facilitate the learning of ESP courses. The study also investigated the difficulties facing the ESP teachers in the teaching process through the teaching ESP courses, and finally the researcher arrived at the following finding:

1. The ESP specialized vocabulary, in fact, creates some difficulty to EFL learners.
2. The ESP courses at universities do not solve the problems of the ESP specialized vocabulary.
3. The difficulties of specialized vocabulary affect the student`s progress in the study.
4. The ESP teachers need more training in order to improve and develop their performance and competence.

### **5.3 Recommendations:**

After analysis, discussions and conclusions, the researcher would like to propose the flowing recommendations for improving and enhancing the ESP specialized vocabulary:

1. ESP teachers should teach the ESP vocabulary in context rather than teaching it in separate lists.
2. ESP teachers should corporate with the subject teachers in designing courses and selecting materials.
3. ESP courses should concentrate on ESP vocabulary in order to enhance the subject.

4. It would be better to increase the teaching hours of ESP courses.
5. The objectives of ESP courses should be clear for both students and teachers.
6. To help the students to comprehend these P courses, it is important to give them pre-courses in English language learning.
7. It is very important to give some activities and ESP tasks inside the class.
8. The universities should train the ESP teachers.
9. ESP courses should be revised from time to time.
10. It is better to construct a system to evaluate the performance of ESP teachers.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies:**

To improve and develop the ESP disciplines many studies may be conducted as follows:

1. Doing some researches of ESP in particular subject such as (medicine/accounting).
2. Some researches concerning the EFL learners before university level to prepare them for university courses

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