

**Promoting Specialized Content Knowledge in an ESP Classroom: Case of
Second-Year ESP Learners of physics at the department of Science and
Technology at the University of Tlemcen**

Dr. Amaria FEHAIMA

University Center of Temouchent (Algeria)

(FLPATP) Research Lab

Abstract

The present paper provides vital data about the benefits of using the Specialized content knowledge in an ESP classroom. It also explores the characteristics aims and objectives behind integrating content based Instruction in an ESP classes ,Particularly, Students of Physics at the department of science and technology at the university of Tlemcen. Therefore, the present work discusses the findings gathered through the data collection procedures, based on evidence from a questionnaire and interview. Furthermore, a mixed method approach has been used to have significant answers about the research questions and confirm the hypotheses. The questionnaire is administered to forty students and a semi-structured interview is also held with ESP teachers in the same department. The results of the present study reveal that ESP students face great difficulties when dealing with professional resources, and this is mainly at the level of content due to the nature of ESP courses provided in ESP classroom. It is also devoted to sorting, reviewing, and interpreting the results that reveal data about the gain of incorporating specializes content knowledge in ESP teaching classes.

Keywords: ESP courses; ESP Students; content based approach; ESP Context.

1. Introduction

Recently, much emphasize is being put to the teaching of English language simply because the use of English language as a ‘*worldwide language*’ which is not limited to a certain extent but it goes beyond to reach the global scale to cope with the demands and challenges of globalization as a process and respond positively to the requirements of our language users in both educational and occupational environments, a progressive tendency takes place in universities and academic institutions to the inclusion of *specialized* language. Therefore, ESP learning is more than learning only a set of technical linguistic terms but it is also about learning how to use English in a particular context with the implication of the needed skills and

Promoting Specialized Content Knowledge in an ESP Classroom: Case of Second-Year ESP Learners of physics at the department of Science and Technology at the University of Tlemcen

Amaria FEHAIMA

objectives of language learning. Experiences make significant contributions to student learning in both practical and linguistic skill areas. For this reason, this study attempts to investigate the effect of integrating *Content-based Instructions* approach. Brinton (2003) points out that the content based instruction ‘allows the choice of content to dictate or influence the selection and sequencing of language items’ (p.206). Therefore, the present work seeks to describe the effectiveness of using the Content-Based Instruction in ESP courses as it discusses the rationale for using the content approach to teach Students of physics in the department of Science and Technology at the University of Tlemcen. Content is the most important element in the content based instruction approach, because the process of language learning is based on it, Richards and Rodgers (2001) mentioned that: ‘Content in Content based Instruction approach usually refers to the subject matter that people learn or transmit using language’. Language learning courses that are mainly driven by content (content-based instruction) were endorsed by learners and teachers, due to their ability to practice the language in a meaningful way beyond grammatical viability. In the field of language teaching, a specific part where the importance of content cannot be disregarded is in the context of English for Specific Purposes. Accordingly, in ESP settings, the curriculum ought to be established around the area of studies where the learners are majoring. The proposed Content-based Instructions approach may be integrated and adapted as an effective way for ESP learners to develop their language skills related to their academic discipline. For the sake of gathering reliable data for this investigation the following guiding research Question has been put forwards; what is the effectiveness of specialised content knowledge in teaching and learning ESP? And what are the views of ESP learners of a mentioned component in their studies with ESP courses?

2

2. Research Design

This study has taken place in the department of science and Technology; it was based on a Case Study where a mixed-method approach has been adopted. Thus, the focus has been put on both qualitative and quantitative methods. In this sense, (Godwin *et al*, 1996, P.161/168) examine the similarities and complementarities between qualitative and quantitative research. From their point of view, the knowledge generated by each approach and the measurement methods of each approach are complementary. They also suggest that each approach can inform and assist the other approach. It is also said that qualitative research produces knowledge that emphasizes process, extrapolation, understanding, and illumination and quantitative research produces knowledge that focuses on outcomes, generalisations, predictions and casual explanations.

This mixed-method approach is characterized by its ability to increase concurrent and construct the validity of the research questions. It also permits the researcher to reduce prejudice (Perlesz and Lindsay, 2003). Arguing in a similar way

(Dörnyei, 2007) asserts the following advantages:

- Increasing the strengths while minimizing the weakness of each paradigm;
- Allowing for several -layer of analysis;
- improving the validity of the research outcomes;
- claiming the generalizability of the results.

Therefore, for the sake of gathering reliable data, the researcher has recourse to the use of the two following research instruments:

Questionnaire

Semi-structured Interview.

Due to the type of present research, the first step used for collecting the data has been done through a students' Questionnaire. The second step refers to the Semi- Structured interview which has been administered to teachers in order to: Elicit useful information about the participant's experiences; Obtain practical knowledge of the interviewees' opinions or impressions

Participants

Richards (2001) writes "Sampling involves asking a partial of the potential population instead of the total population and seeks to create a sample that is representative." (P.58). Therefore, the selected sample was second year 40 students of physics *in order to well manage the research activity*, In addition to six teachers from the same department.

3. and Discussion

After gathering the necessary information, the data has to be analyzed through the use of analytical and logical techniques. Finally, drawing conclusions on the basis of results obtained. According to Marshall and Rossman (1990) Data analysis is seen as a challenging assignment that requires much more effort and skills. It is achieved through making suitable decisions about the purpose and goals of the study, the research questions, and the data collection procedures as explained by Marshall and Rossman (1990) "Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process it does not preceded in a linear fashion; it is not neat". (P.111) Therefore, the study is mainly based on a combination of both qualitative and quantitative data

approaches in an Endeavour to manage different sets of facts and make them subject to multilevel of examinations and interpretations and attain what is called an *outright picture of reality*. According to Greene *et al.*(1989), these two approaches “...are used to measure overlapping but also different facets of a phenomenon, yielding an enriched understanding by illustrating, clarifying, or elaborating on certain aspects” (Quoted in Dornyei,2007,p.16)

3.1. Learners’ Questionnaire Analysis

Q1. Do you think about English is in relation to your studies?

This question investigates whether students are aware about the importance of the English language in their studies by giving their opinions which are well interpreted in the following figure.

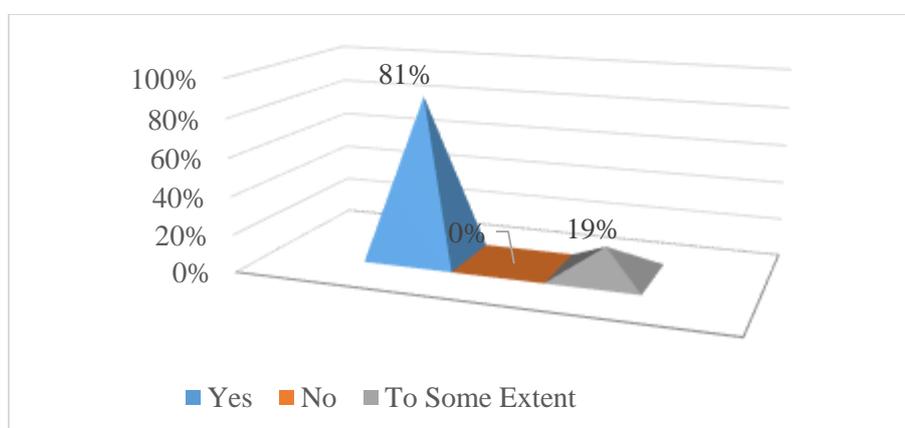


Figure 1: the value of English in ESP classroom

The result reveal that the majority (91 %) of the learners were aware of the value given to English nowadays in education with great demands of integrating English in their discipline, while (19%) of the sample using English only to some extent .

Q2. Is the content based Approach effective in your studies?

The question is intended to see if the content affects the student’s learning motivation. The results from the close ended questions shows the percentages obtained from the administrated questionnaire. The following figure explains the results more.

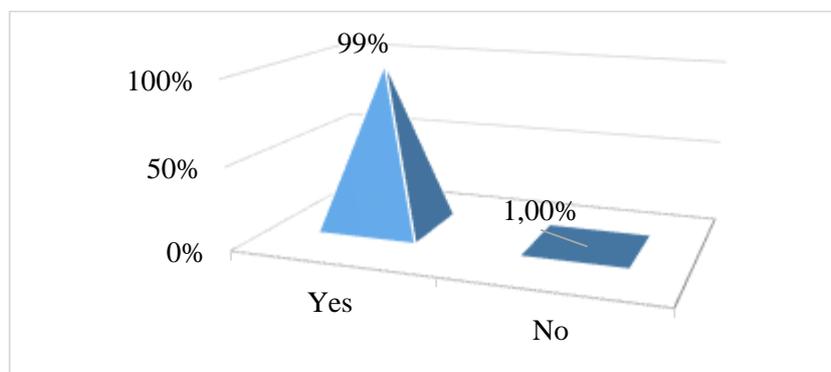


Figure 2: The Effectiveness of specialized Knowledge

The students' answers were all positive (100%) and confirmed that content is a motivational factor for them to study.

Q3. What is the most skill needed in your studies?

This question seeks to know what skill is mostly used in their studies. Therefore, students are given the four skills to be evaluated:

- a. Reading b. Listening c. Speaking d. Writing

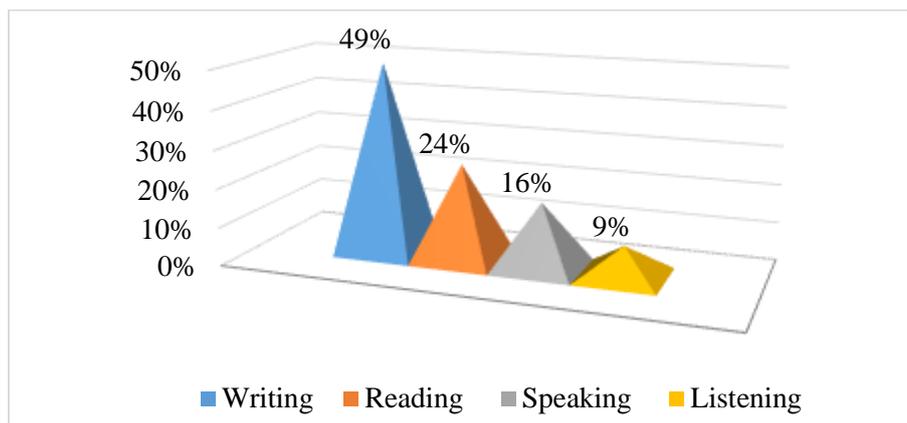


Figure 3: Skills' Preference

The result shows that the learners consider Writing skill the most demanded with (49%), as they stressed reading with (24%) in the students' career. Additionally the two last skills; speaking (16%) and listening (9%) are basic learning skills.

Q4. Do you think that Specialized content component can cover your specific needs during ESP course?

This question aims at knowing if the CBA covered by the content n cover the learners' need and lacks t during ESP lectures. It shows the learners' satisfaction.

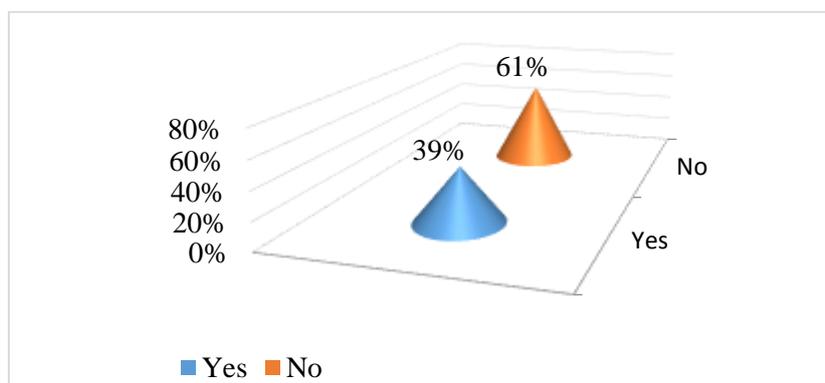


Figure 4: learners' Reactions

The results obtained from this question reveal that 39% of students know their specific language requirements within their academic context. However, 61% of them find that specialised content does not cover most of their needs.

3.2. Teachers' Interview Analysis

Most of the interviewed ESP teachers agree on the fact that content approach is seems to be a helpful class material and should be used in their ESP classes for a various reasons such as:

- It has an impact on learners' achievements. As ESP teachers try to deliver some of the common basics, providing their learners with strategies that help to enhance their knowledge in their future career.
- Motivates the learners and allowing them to achieve certain progress in both language learning and specific academic and professional purposes.
- It seems to be the suitable approach in ESP context being the most relevant to the students at both academic and professional level as it should fit the students' needs, enabling them to perceive the link between course content and their basic needs.

4. The Discussion of the Main Result

All of these results together with the teachers' responses to the semi-structured interview questions, not only validated the existence of the previously stated problems in ESP class but also revealed once again the fact that to bombard the students with dry knowledge without providing them with analytical tools that will deepen their understanding and therefore lead to a greater pleasure, never seems to work. Analyses of the participants' responses to a questionnaire and semi-structured interview showed that most of them held positive attitudes toward using content. One may conclude that what is significantly related to their attitudes toward a mentioned approach in their studies is explicitly the preferred learning styles, in other words, students' attitude toward ESP may be influenced by the *ESP* teachers' instructional methods used in ESP classes. Additionally, Though ESP teacher is not supposed to teach content in ESP he must be trained to base his instructional materials for the purpose of enabling his learners to engage in meaningful interaction appropriate to their specialized discourse community.

5- Conclusion

To conclude, from the results obtained in the present study, one may conclude that teaching with content based component in ESP context is a fertile area. Hence, the present study has examined the importance of reading literary texts to EFL students in an Algerian context

and has reported on the feedbacks of only a small number of students. More studies using different approaches implementing different strategies and methods, or student populations, are expected and as many ESP teachers use content based component in their classes, more ESP learners will develop interests in English in particular and learning the language through specialized content based in general.

References

- Benabdellah.A.(2017): Raising Business Learners' Awareness through Authentic Materials in an ESP Classroom Context: Case of 2nd year Students at the Preparatory School of Economics and Commercial Sciences, Unpublished Doctorate Thesis. Tlemcen
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Fehaima. A. (2018): An Integrative Approach to Teaching Literary texts: Case of 2nd-year EFL Learners the Abou Bakr Belkaid, Unpublished doctorate Thesis. Tlemcen
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1990). *Designing Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mouton, J. (2001). *The Practice of Social Research*. Cape Town: oxford university press.
- O'Leary, Z. (2004). *The Essential Guide to doing Research*. SAGE Publications, London.
- Perlesz, A., & Lindsay, J. (2003). Methodological Triangulation in Researching Families: Making Sense of Dissonant Data. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 6(1), 25–40.
- Richards, J. (2001). *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. and Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*.
- Yin, R. (1994). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2nd Ed.). Beverly Hills, C A: SAGE