ESP Education in Algeria: A Description of the Teaching Situation Scenario with Focus on Problems, Challenges and Training

Dr. Nassira BOUDERSA

ENS-Assia Djebar-de Constantine
Constantine-Algeria
nassiraboudersa.ensc@gmail.com

Abstract

Algerian English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers usually undertake different roles and tasks. They are always engaged in practices that involve designing courses, developing materials, evaluating materials and so on. Teaching ESP is usually claimed to be preferably taught by an ESP field-specialist, not merely an English teacher. The reason behind that is related to the fact that English teachers are, most often, not prepared or trained to become ESP teachers. Training English teachers in the field(s) of ESP is a central factor in the future success of any ESP course, since ESP teachers are supposed to teach not only the English language, but they are required to teach the English language through specific-field(s) content. It is our belief that in the Algerian higher education context, many teachers of ESP face serious problems and ongoing challenges in the ESP class. The ESP teaching situation becomes more complicated in light of the fact that there are no programs for Algerian teacher training in ESP at all. The aim of the present research study is to discuss the problems and the challenges faced by Algerian ESP teachers in teaching ESP from the point of view of an ESP teacher an Applied Linguistics researcher. Focus will also be on discussing the importance of developing and introducing training programs for Algerian ESP teachers.

Keywords: ESP teaching, specific-language, content, problems, challenges, teacher training programs.
Introduction

The area of ESP teaching has witnessed differences in the speed of its development in different educational contexts. Each educational context seems to reflect specific needs, problems, challenges, teaching practices and other specifications. These differences make the area of ESP seem to be a non-universal phenomenon (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). That is to say, in each particular teaching context, ESP is considered as a separate undertaking, but similarities can be found, though.

In the Algerian educational context, the teaching of English, in general, and ESP, in particular, has become a primary demand and need for all types of communication. In light of this, the Algerian higher education institutions have started to provide courses (subjects, in fact) to teach special English to students in different fields of study (sociology, hospitality, business, tourism, economy, engineering and so on).

With the continuous and constant call to provide special English courses to university students from different fields and to equip them with the necessary language skills and field-knowledge needed for their studies and work (academic/professional), the Algerian educational institutions started to introduce the teaching of English at the BA, MA and even PhD level(s). Teaching the new special language course requires recruiting or, at least, seeking to find English teachers to be in charge of the subject. In light of that, English teachers are usually called upon to undertake this task.

In their turn, English teachers, who are usually teachers of general English (GE), English language teaching (ELT) or teachers of English as a foreign language (TEFL), start to teach GE at the level of BA, mainly, to introduce specific-field students to the system of the English language as a whole (grammar, syntax, phonology, morphology). At advanced levels, English teachers shift from teaching general English to teaching field-specific English. This is the case at the MA and PhD level(s). Teaching in the area of ESP aims to provide courses in English that are usually thought of to have students’ needs as the basis. This
is, actually, what is supposed to happen in any ESP course, but this may not be exactly what really happens in the different ESP teaching contexts.

In the ESP course, the type of English that Algerian students need to learn is the one that trains and prepares them for success in academic and professional contexts. This has been clearly pointed out by Basturkmen (2006), who states that, “language is learnt not for its own sake or for the sake of gaining a general education, but to smooth the path to entry or greater linguistic efficiency in academic, professional or workplace environments” (p. 18). Put differently, ESP courses aim to make students specialists in their professional fields through the English medium.

As it has been mentioned previously, the Algerian educational institutions provide now GE and ESP courses in different fields of study at different levels. The aim behind that is to develop university students’ English for specific purposes skills and competencies. Despite the fact that ESP courses are being provided and emphasized, the area of ESP education has not at all received the required importance.

Seemingly, efforts might be gathered to implement and integrate ESP teaching in BA, MA and PhD levels. There are usually constant and continuous demands for teaching/learning English for different specific purposes, but there are also strong and on-going complaints that students are not being taught ESP; in the best cases, students are being taught general English only. What is astonishing is that, even in GE, students’ level is weak and not adequate at all to pursue a subsequent course in ESP to prepare them for appropriate and successful communication in their specific fields. What is more astonishing, though, is the fact that in many cases Algerian students are not taught English (GE course) in their BA and even MA level.

PhD students of Sociology in Abdelhamid Mehri University-University of Constantine 02- for instance, are one best example of what has been mentioned. These students (10) started their PhD in the academic year 2017-2018. They all belong to different sub-fields within the realm of sociology. For them, English is highly needed for different purposes: for their studies, for their research and for their future academic or professional career. Most importantly, these PhD sociology candidates need
specific English for purposes of conducting their current and future research by reading articles and books, writing documents, participating in national and international scientific research events, attending or listening to seminars and experts’ presentations and so on.

We believe that there is an urgent need to develop these students’ English language competencies through their content-area or specific-field in order to prepare them for the different future tasks that they will be involved in. When discussing the point of whether they have studied English in their BA or MA levels and what is it that they have actually studied, I noticed that some of these PhD students did not at all study English in their BA level, while some students have studied it in a very non-organized, non-serious, non-purposeful or meaningful way. What is more is the fact that when I discussed the matter with those who have had an English course in their MA level, some have said that the English teacher was teaching them how to write a curriculum vitae (CV) in English.

From some experience with students from different fields of study at BA, MA or PhD levels, I have also noticed that there are serious problems at all levels in the GE course, in general, and in the ESP course, in particular. What has really called my attention, though, is one main component that can have, and have had, in fact, great influence on the whole ESP teaching situation. This central component is the teacher.

The absence of any sound, theory-based, meaningful and well-designed ESP courses for Algerian students in specific fields is of major importance in ESP teaching. In fact, lack of students’ knowledge (language/content) in ESP places them in a completely disadvantaged position and creates serious difficulties for learning later on. That is why it is always preferable and advisable to study and predict a teaching situation better than to diagnose it.
That being said, we cannot, however, deny the importance and the necessity of diagnosis, since, in many cases, even providing students with well-designed ESP courses to prepare them in their field does not, most often, guarantee any teaching/learning success. Put another way, we cannot always be sure about the fact of whether the ESP course/program is really effective and beneficial or not. Actually, many influential factors come into play and any non-informed, wrong concept, practice or decision can put the whole ESP teaching situation at stake. Here again, a central factor comes into play: the ESP teacher.

1. The Situation of ESP Teaching in Algeria

English for specific purposes has become a prominent area of teaching/learning in Algeria during the few last decades. ESP education has also become a central educational and pedagogical concern. If we want to provide a general picture of the situation of ESP teaching in Algeria, we can say that Algerian ESP teachers hold different beliefs with regard to the area of ESP both in terms of theory and practice. In fact, their beliefs and attitudes are clearly reflected in their teaching practices. What really calls one’s attention is the fact that there is usually a kind of discrepancy and controversy between the different opinions.

There are many points that need careful emphasis in the area of ESP. Great efforts are, for instance, needed in order to only design an ESP course. This one task, out of many other tasks, is said to require taking many other central factors into due consideration. In addition to that, before any attempt to design a given ESP course, many questions have first to be asked, investigated and provided with an answer. Some of these question are related to the fact of how similar or different the various fields of study (engineering, politics, medicine, sociology, and so on) are. Another point is related to what should be taught and how (content and methodology) in each specific field.

Another related central point that should be raised is related to the fact that there can never be a ready-made and efficient text-book or course to use in teaching ESP to a
particular group of students. Actually, students’ needs and purposes in taking a specific ESP course are not at all the same. Needs and purposes are not static; they change over time. What might be needed today in a given situation, might not be need tomorrow in other situations. Furthermore, it is well-established now that students are not homogeneous; they are heterogeneous in many aspects. They differ in their level in the English language; they differ in their mastery of field-specific content and they differ in their purposes in learning the language. It can be clearly noticed that there are many central questions that an ESP teacher should ask to her/himself, and that all of them have to be taken into consideration when designing and teaching the ESP course. This might appear straightforward as a task, but, in fact, it is not at all an easy task to undertake, especially for English teachers who are neither specialists in the field, nor have been trained in the ESP area of profession.

In line with what has been stated previously, and as far as the English language is concerned, we can say that the level of Algerian students in the English language does not really help them to communicate (speak, listen, read and write) using the language, not to mention communication in specific fields. When asked about the importance of learning English, the general tendency of many students reflects an awareness towards its importance. They express their need, will and motivation to learn the language and to develop their communication skills in it. The actual status and practices of teaching the language in the different phases of higher education (BA, MA, PhD), especially in field-specific areas, do not, however, recognize and acknowledge the central importance and necessity of the language either in academic or in professional domains. In other words, teaching field-specific content through the English language is not really given importance in practical terms.

If provided at the BA and/or MA levels, the English course, which paves the way for the ESP course to be introduced at subsequent advanced level, is not even given enough time to be taught and learnt. At most, the course will take place once per week and be
taught in one and a half or two hours maximum. English (general English) is taught as a simple subject that has been imposed in the teaching program by the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education. In other words, the English course is provided as a subject of secondary importance. This is a fact that has been experienced in many so-called GE and/or ESP teaching contexts. English, for general education or for specific purposes, is not at all considered as something important. Beliefs, attitudes and practices give a clear picture of the situation. This is, however, one aspect of a list of central factors that influence both GE and ESP teaching situations and contribute to success or to failure.

What makes the situation much more serious is not only the time allocated to the course. The importance given to the English course in terms of co-efficient gives also a clear picture of the whole paradoxical situation in terms of the importance given to teaching English, be it for general or for specific purposes. In a worst situation, English is given a 1 co-efficient, and in a best situation, it is given a 2 co-efficient. This makes the subject seem less important compared to any other main-field subject taught to the same students. This is a fact that can be seen in many departments where the English course is provide for students of specific fields.

In addition to that, Algerian ESP students’ perception of the importance of the English subject as it is reflected by the allocated time and co-efficient makes them underestimate the value of the course by not attending and/or missing many sessions. In other words, they take the English course less seriously. This can also lead to the ESP course failure and can create serious teaching/learning problems.

In a previous discussion, the aspect of needs analysis has been mentioned as a very important component in an ESP course. This key course element is very central to ESP teaching. According to Richards et al. (1992, p. 242-243), needs analysis refers to “the process of determining the needs for which a learner or a group of learners requires a language and arranging the needs according to priorities… needs or needs analysis stand for the general to topics-subjects area that learners are required to learn about.” ESP courses
can never be ready-made; they are always designed in light of specific learners’ needs and purposes in studies or work.

To design a specific ESP course, one has first to undertake a needs analysis, whereby s/he identifies what particular learners need English for. Needs analysis is described as being “the corner stone of ESP and leads to a very focused course” (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p. 122). Since needs analysis is considered as the corner stone of an ESP course, then the elaboration of any ESP course is mainly based of learners’ needs so that the course will be effective, beneficial and meaningful to the students in question.

An ESP course can reflect shared needs of specific-field students. To use Simpson and Ure’s (1994, p. 85) words, the ESP course should meet “every need, … but it ought to be possible to respond to those needs which are substantially common.” Specific-field learners’ needs can be similar in many cases, but differences can also be identified. These needs can be directly explored via administering questionnaires or building interviews with a specific group of learners. In this way, one can have an idea about students’ needs, abilities, preferences, and purposes in learning a given language. In addition to that, learners’ needs can be classified into two types: target needs and learning needs. In target needs, focus is on what the learner needs to do in a target situation, while in the learning needs, focus is on what the learner needs to do in order to learn (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

2. Description of the ESP Course Situation

Generally, in an Algerian ESP course, the teacher provides students with a text to read. The topic of the text is not necessarily related to the students’ field of study. The teacher is supposed to explain the lesson (topic of text) and ESP students are required to follow to get the information and meaning. Due to the students’ weak level in the English language (both GE and ESP), certain teachers usually feel obliged to switch to the French and/or Standard Algerian Arabic, or even dialectal Arabic, for purposes of making the
students understand the text. In this sense, the ESP classroom takes the nature of a multilingual class. The use of students’ mother language (Algerian Arabic) and/or first foreign language (French) is used by many ESP teachers as a way to help Algerian ESP students in understanding the text written in a target language (English, in this case).

Questions related to the use of an intermediate language in the ESP, or any other foreign language, classroom have usually been asked and discussion has usually been raised. Research often results in a call for foreign language teachers to avoid the use of their mother language as an intermediate language to make students understand the foreign language (target language). Translation in the first foreign language (French) is also discouraged.

ESP teachers maintain, however, that if the ESP teacher uses only the English language to teach the content of the ESP course, then one can easily expect that in the best cases, ESP learners will get only fifty percent of the course. This percentage is still questionable since students’ proficiency level in both language and content is not, and cannot be, the same. In such cases, the ESP teacher’s position is quite difficult because, after all, any teacher’s purpose in class is to make learners understand what is explained and to make sure that information has been transmitted. For this reason, the ESP teacher finds her/himself not only inclined, but, in fact, obliged to shift to the French or Arabic language, the language (s) at the reach of every Algerian student in the ESP class.

As it has been stated, in the so-called ESP course, the teacher provides students with a reading text as the essential basis for the ESP course. The text usually centers around a general topic, but sometimes it can be related to the ESP students’ specific field of study. The text is said to expose ESP learners to different and various vocabulary and terminology as well as field-specific concepts. It is not, however, clear whether the decision of text-selection is purposefully or randomly made.

In light of the text provided for reading, ESP students are involved in questions of comprehension (pre-text questions (warm-up), in-text questions and post-text questions).
Reading comprehension questions engage the students in text-analysis and understanding. After that, students have a discussion of the text, where the teacher asks questions to check students’ follow and understanding. The teacher can also ask questions to engage them in discussion and debate. Engaging ESP students in discussion and debate is very important since it will serve as an initiation to later practice and will train students to use the language in question. Despite its importance, very few ESP teachers do it, however.

After that, practice of language and grammar follows. Focus can be on synonymy and antonymy, for instance. Grammatical structures are also taught and students practice their usage in different activities. Other activities may also focus on having students practice the vocabulary covered in previous phases of the course. This is believed to help the ESP learner to put into practice what has been learnt.

After the phase of reading, and even speaking, the ESP teacher can also provide ESP students with listening materials, especially in the presence of the necessary equipment. Then, comes the phase of writing. To improve the student’s writing skills, the teacher can ask students to write a paragraph (s) about the topic already covered in the course by making use of the previously covered vocabulary/terminology and language structures. The skill of speaking can precede writing, or it can come at the end of the course. It can also be integrated to that of writing and vocabulary and grammar. This depends on the teacher’s skill and competence in structuring the ESP course.

The very last phase in the teaching of an ESP course is usually the assessment of learners’ learning and the evaluation of the whole course. This is not actually done in many cases, despite its great importance in the whole ESP course. The assessment of students’ learning is necessary and has to be reflective of the course objectives set at the beginning of the course. Many ESP teachers do not undertake the task of continuous assessment of students’ learning. The only type of assessment used is that of summative assessment, which takes place at the end of the semester in the form of an official exam to provide a final mark.
Contrary to what used to happen before, nowadays’ assessment should be mainly diagnostic and formative. Summative assessment comes at the very end, usually during exams. Focus should be placed on helping students to learn first, then assessing their learning at the end. At the beginning of each year, ESP teachers can test students in order to identify their abilities, then their needs, especially that students cannot most often know their actual level. The teacher can also ask students questions to know their needs, interests and so on. Again, formative assessment can be used in the process of teaching/learning. It is continuous in nature and its main use is to help the teacher to be continually informed about the learners’ progress in learning and to make sure that the course objectives are being attained. The obtained results can be taken, analyzed and interpreted so that the teacher knows what are the strengths and weaknesses of each learner. It is only then that teaching intervention can be beneficial.

Summative assessment is also of central importance in the process of teaching/learning since it will also inform the teacher about students’ learning and help her/him plan future teaching and makes informed decisions. For that reason, ESP teachers are always required to integrate both formative and summative assessments in their ESP class. What should be born in mind, however, is the fact that a thorough reading and understanding of the theory and practice of both formative and summative assessments have to be made in order to use them in an appropriate and correct manner. In general, one can never be sure of whether Algerian ESP teachers take seriously the assessment component in their teaching.

All in all, we can say that an ideal Algerian ESP course can follow the teaching scenario described above. This does not, however, mean that all Algerian ESP teachers, who are not ESP specialists, do only what has been mentioned. In some cases, an ideal ESP course may take the form of just reading and practicing language structures, vocabulary and grammar. What is more is that the ESP course is not usually really designed and all what is given is a text taken randomly or in hurry just to have the job done and teach.
something to ESP students. The teaching and the integration of the four language skills are usually ignored because the course is not even designed.

Some central decisions in the ESP course have to be taken in an informative way. The texts to be included and used as the basis for the ESP course have to be decided in light of students’ specific field, experts’ advice and ESP course designer evaluation of quality, difficulty and pertinence, inter alia. The exercises that should be included in the course should be well-structured and organized; they should have focus and objective, and should be meaningful to students’ life.

As far as the ESP course/syllabus is concerned, there is no ready-made syllabus in any ESP course. No one makes an effort in order to develop a syllabus for particular ESP classes. This is a recurring problem at BA, MA and PhD levels. There is no appropriate and suitable course/syllabus. If any syllabus is provided, it would be mostly centred around teaching grammatical aspects of the language (articles, tenses, sentence structures, etc.). No tailor-made materials are provided. Generally, most ESP teachers take texts from different sources (internet, reading-books with a variety of text topics, and so on) and teach them. Most often, the texts chosen already have related exercises that follow them, which makes it an easy task for the teacher. It is strongly believed that it is a difficult, but a required, task on the part of the ESP teacher to design a specific course/syllabus to her/his particular students.

The teaching/learning approach that is used by the ESP teacher is also of great importance. In the Algerian ESP context, and in light of the many aforementioned problems that exist in the area of ESP teaching, one can never be sure of whether or not the approach used in teaching/learning ESP is a communicative approach. The so-called ESP course provided both at the university of Constantine 02 and the university of Constantine 03, in different departments (Philosophy, History, Sociology, Political Sciences, and so on), seems to have no notion at all of developing Algerian ESP students’ skills of communication: discussions, debating, individual/group presentations, problem-solving situations, reading and
analysing texts critically, practicing the use of language contextually, translating short texts, integrating knowledge and language skills together, and so on. By taking a deep look at the syllabus found in every department, the researcher can say that the approach used to teach/learn ESP is a language-based or a grammar-based approach. No communicative component in ESP teaching/learning is said to be found.

In line with the previous point, there are also serious problems in ESP teaching approaches. In many cases, ESP teaching is, to a great extent, teacher-centered. What is more is that there is always a sense of dissatisfaction among both teachers and students in the ESP course. Calls are always raised to adopt and advance more student-centered ESP teaching, where the main focus should be placed on the learner and the learning process in the first place. A shift in the dominant teacher-centered paradigm is always required. There should be a change in many aspects related to the ESP area such as: ESP teachers’ beliefs, the curriculum followed, the educational practices adopted and the textbooks used.

The ESP course or syllabus is supposed to be based upon key and sound components adopting both a communicative and integrative approach. The teaching method should be centered on learners and learning. The teacher is no longer considered as the main and only active agent in the classroom; in fact, it is the learner.

Learners’ needs, course objectives, course content, the teaching material, the teaching method, the assessment method, and the teaching approach adopted by the ESP teacher should all be based first on a general and thorough discourse and/or corpus analysis of specific field texts: sociology, politics, medicine, business, and so forth. For instance, the field of political sciences is a specific ESP field that has its specific language, register and discourse. Analysing any type of specific-language field is a necessary step towards ESP course and syllabus design, since this practice puts the ESP course-designer in a better position to identify the main and distinguishing characteristics of each genre or register, the topics that are usually treated, the terminology and concepts used, and so on. In light of discourse/corpus analysis and specific-field text and language characteristics, the Algerian
ESP teacher can investigate and identify what topics to choose for reading texts and what texts can have a higher frequency of specific-field concepts and terminology. It is in this way that the ESP course/syllabus designer can provide meaningful, suitable and interesting course content to the ESP student.

3. Teachers’ Roles and Challenges in Teaching ESP

English for Specific Purposes is based upon the principle that a course has to involve field-specific language and content. One of the main issues in a typical Algerian ESP class is the fact that most, if not all, teachers of ESP are not specialists in the professional field that they are taking part in. To put it differently, in most cases, teachers of ESP do neither master the language nor the content (subject-matter) in the ESP course that they teach to a particular group of students. This lack of language knowledge and content mastery puts the Algerian ESP teacher in a difficult situation, whereby s/he finds her/himself teaching texts and topics that s/he has no knowledge about.

Another role and challenge is that of ESP course design. The ESP teacher is also supposed to be the course designer of the ESP course/syllabus. S/he is responsible for conducting learners’ needs analysis (also program’s deficiency analysis), the selection of the teaching material, its structuring, its teaching and its evaluation, and so forth. If the ESP teacher is not a specialist in the subject-matter in question, say aviation for instance, then s/he can face serious problems and challenges with regard to the ESP course design. Problems can involve many aspects, including the appropriate and effective selection of the topics to include in the course, since this decision will have a great impact on whether students will learn language vocabulary, terminology, language structures and field-specific concepts that are required in their studies and work. In addition to that, skills in course-design require a deep theoretical understanding of the key components of a course. Mastering the necessary methodological and organizational skills in designing courses/syllabus are central to the success of the ESP teacher.
If the problem of topic selection is settled, the non-specialized ESP teacher can face another serious difficulty or challenge, which is related to the effective and successive structuring and arrangement of the course topics in a suitable and logical manner both in terms of content and language. Any illogical and non-harmonic succession of the topics included in an ESP course will lead to serious confusion on the part of the ESP learner. This will also make the ESP course seem to lack coherence and logic in language and content teaching and progression.

A further challenge that can occur in a given ESP course is related to text adaptation. Lack subject-field language and content knowledge can also create problems for the ESP teacher since s/he will not be able to decide what to keep and what to take from a text. The teacher can find difficulty in deciding, for instance, which information is most important and which information is of least importance in the subject matter.

The ESP teacher will also have to make conscious desicions about ESP students’ level (both language and content knowledge) and the appropriate selection of the text in terms of level of difficulty. As it has been mentioned earlier, no one class is homogeneous with regard to students’ level in language and subject-matter knowledge. The ESP teacher has to take into consideration the fact that the ESP class is usually heterogeneous. If the teacher does not have an adequate professional level and the required knowledge and experience, s/he will have serious troubles and challenges to design a course based on texts that are relevant in terms of content and language level of difficulty.

Choosing simple and superficial texts in terms of language and content level of difficulty will most probably not interest the ESP learner who believes in her/his professional knowledge abilities in the subject-matter. Simple texts will push the student to underestimate both the ESP course and the ESP teacher. Put simply, the ESP teacher should select ESP texts that are motivating and challenging. It is only then that ESP students can activate their professional knowledge in their subject-matter and can feel that the course makes sense to them.
In many ESP classes, one can usually come across situations whereby the teacher of the course is not its designer. This is something quite spread in many ESP teaching situations, especially in the Algerian higher education context. Lack of serious and continuous collaboration between the two central agents (course teacher and content teacher) in course design can usually lead to teaching and learning failure in the ESP course.

Students’ level in English is also of central importance and influence at all levels of the ESP course. Taking an ESP course implies that all students have the required level of proficiency in the general English, which is the beginner or intermediate level. As it has been mentioned previously, the ESP class is usually made up of students who differ from each other in terms of their level in general English. Clearly stated, ESP students differ with regard to both language competence and professional competence. These differences make students’ needs, preferences and attitudes vis-à-vis the ESP course quite different. The ESP teacher has to take all this into account.

Another serious challenge that face ESP teachers is related to the fact of whether or not the ESP teacher should be a specialist in a specific ESP field. The answer to this question has been provided by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), who argue that the ESP teacher does not need to be a specialist in subject-knowledge. In fact, all what s/he requires is three main characteristics: positive attitude toward ESP content, adequate knowledge of fundamental principles of the subject area, and an awareness of how much they already know.

ESP teachers should gain enough knowledge related to learners’ specific field of study. In the ESP course, they are required to help students gain field-specific knowledge in their content area through the English language. They should also help ESP students to develop different skills of comprehension and communication by constant exposure to authentic materials in their subject-field (Bojovic, 2006).
The main ESP teachers’ challenges can be listed in what follows. The list is not exhaustive, and each ESP teaching situation can highlight new challenges. Similarities can be found in many ESP teaching classrooms, though.

- The ESP course should contain special language or terminology and special content
- Teachers of ESP who are not specialists or professionals in the content of the field in question should enrich and widen their knowledge in the field in question
- Teachers of ESP should master subject-matter language
- Teachers of ESP should be course or syllabus designers
- Teachers of ESP should design their own material and evaluate it
- Teachers of ESP should have the knowledge and competences to decide about the texts (level of difficulty, vocabulary, concepts) to involve in their ESP course
- Teachers of ESP should be competent enough to sequence and structure topics and lessons in the ESP course.
- Teachers of ESP should be competent enough to decide about what to keep and what to take out of texts in the process of text-modification or adaptation
- Teachers of ESP should be competent enough to make appropriate decisions in the choice of texts that meet students’ level of proficiency
- ESP teachers’ should never underestimate the ESP course (decreases students’ motivation)
- ESP teachers should collaborate with ESP specialists in program design
- ESP teachers should avoid misconceptions about the ESP teaching responsibilities and ESP teacher’s role.
- ESP teachers should be involved in ongoing and continuous training programs and should boost their professional development.

All in all, we can say that teaching ESP is necessary and is highly demanded,
especially in the Algerian context. The first challenging step towards ESP teaching is the analysis of students’ needs in order to select materials and to design a specific ESP course directed to particular students. Ignoring students’ needs will create serious problems in the ESP course. The Teaching pedagogy, ESP teachers’ competence, materials’ design, students’ levels, and students’ needs, inter alia, are all key challenging forces in ESP and should be given due consideration in order to reach sound and effective ESP teaching and learning situation.

One central point to consider in ESP teaching is that there should be a reconsideration and a re-definition of the ESP teachers’ roles and responsibilities in the ESP teaching profession. The re-definition should involve all the required responsibilities that any ESP teacher should undertake like designing specific courses, developing curriculum, selecting texts and content, and so on.

One of the main sources of teaching differences and discrepancies between teachers of ESP is because they hold different beliefs that reflect differences in their teaching practices. The solution for that is to equip ESP teachers with the necessary theory and developments in the area of ESP (Farhady, 2005). When teachers are made aware of the necessary theory and teaching practices related to ESP teaching, this may produce a sense of uniformity in their teaching since their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and methods in ESP teaching will be less questionable or problematic.

One way to help ESP teachers, especially non-field specialist ESP teachers, to achieve that is through providing them with ESP training programs. There should be professional training courses and programs to prepare ESP teachers for the profession. This is a highly required matter especially that many teachers find themselves having no theoretical or practical foundation in teaching ESP. They have an insufficient knowledge and skills. The need for teacher training programs provided by specialists is of central importance. There should be sound and deep focus on the existing principles, approaches and practices of ESP teaching (Erry, 2001).
4. ESP Teacher Training Education

One central factor that requires careful and continuous focus in any educational institution is the factor of teachers’ ongoing training in their specific area(s) of teaching. Lack of teacher’s training programs and professional development is a central issue in all Algerian higher education contexts (Boudersa, 2017). It is no surprise, then, to find similar situations in departments other than the departments of foreign languages (French/English). This is the actual situation of ESP teachers in many Algerian universities and different subject-field departments in the humanities, social sciences, or science.

In the area of ESP teaching, ESP teachers usually have problems related to training. There are no training programs to help them improve and develop in their profession. Chen (2000), for instance, states that “the ESP profession faces twin problems, namely lack of teacher training programs in many areas of the world and the dissatisfaction with conventional theory-into-practice training models” (p. 389). These twin problems are at the center of Algerian ESP teachers problems, in particular, and teachers of English, in general.

In light of the absence of teachers’ training programs in ESP, ESP teachers usually rely on themselves in their training since this is the only solution they have at hand. ESP teachers are usually advised to adopt self-training approach in order to develop their skills and enrich their knowledge in particular ESP areas (Master, 1997). This self-training is a challenge to improve teachers’ learning and teaching practices. In fact, it is necessary since it forms a part of a teacher’s professional development.

Since training programs are not usually affordable, self-training might seem an excellent option for the ESP teacher, but one can never ignore the fact that this effort, even if made seriously and continuously, will never be able to replace training programs developed in educational institutions and introduced by experts in ESP content, syllabus’ designers, materials’ developers, materials’ evaluators, learning assessment professionals, and the like. Self-training can be considered as a temporary solution that will save the ESP
teacher in certain cases, but will not be so in the majority of cases. To use Chen’s (2000) words, self-training can be a ‘safe life-belt’, but not a ‘life-boat’.

The necessity for academic and professional training programs is a constant demand. ESP teacher training programs should receive great attention and should be given great importance. Certain Algerian higher education institutions may superficially claim to be providing courses for training teachers, but this is not what is found in reality. If they are really provided, then the problem is more serious than what is expected.

Besides that, actual practices do not at all show the true value and central importance of providing well-informed, well-designed, and professionally-based training programs to both pre-service and in-service teachers in any field or area. The gap of teachers’ training in all Algerian educational domains can be easily noticed, and training in the area of ESP, in particular, is not an exception to that.

To conclude, we can say that constant theoretical and practical investigation is one solution to different educational contexts. Observation and description of what actually takes place in real-life teaching practices will give one a better picture of what is good or wrong in any learning classrooms. Taking a deep glance at how ESP is being taught in Algeria and exploring Algerian ESP teachers’ beliefs, attitudes and practices will also be very insightful to evaluate the whole ESP teaching situation. Teachers’ teaching practices are a good way to understand the underlying principles.

**Conclusion**

Training teachers in ESP has been claimed to be a central factor in preparing English teachers for the profession of ESP teaching. ESP teachers should teach ESP in the English language through content-specific field(s). We believe that it is only in light of effective and meaningful training programs provided by professional ESP experts and specific-field practitioners that success in teaching and learning can be achieved in any ESP classroom situation.
It is also our belief also that in the Algerian higher education context, there are no programs for teacher training, in general, and in ESP, in particular. Future investigations vis-à-vis Algerian teachers’ problems and challenges in teaching ESP have to be conducted in order to reach more conclusive and insightful results for purposes of taking decisive measures to treat such problematic situations in higher education.

The present research paper has been mainly based upon a university EFL teacher, Applied Linguistics researcher (discourse/corpus analysis) and ESP teacher for the purpose of identifying, highlighting and evaluating the general ESP teaching situation in certain Algerian universities, mainly the university of Constantine 02 (University of Abdelhamid Mehri) and the university of Constantine 03 (University of Salah Boubendir). This paper is also an introduction to a related research that is being practically conducted in the area of ESP education (teaching practices and training education) in the Algerian context.

Future research focus should be constantly placed on investigating the importance of developing and introducing training programs for ESP teachers in Algeria. Algerian ESP teachers’ beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices have to be emphasized to better understand the situation and find appropriate solutions.

References