

THE TEACHERS' NEEDS FOR MEDICAL ENGLISH IN THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE AT ABDELHAMID IBN-BADIS UNIVERSITY

Abstract: The urgent need for English instruction at the faculty of medicine, Mostaganem University, motivated us to investigate the teachers' needs for medical English. In this prospect, an in-depth needs analysis was conducted to know the *teachers' of medicine* needs for English in order to make an appropriate course design for them. Accordingly, a set of procedures were taken in which a questionnaire was elaborated to investigate the learners' profiles, their target needs, and their learning styles. Furthermore, an interview with the responsible for medical English was held to determine the way the learning process should be conducted. Moreover, a placement test consolidated by a classroom observation was used to reveal the learners' strengths and weaknesses regarding the language. The results of the needs analysis were exploited and interpreted to elaborate a suitable course design for the teachers of medicine at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University to equip them with the linguistic tool to be able to use English as a medium in their researches and to attend international conferences. Finally, an official implementation of the suggested course design for medical professionals in the academic setting was proposed as a first attempt to introduce English to the faculty of medicine.

Keywords: medical English, needs analysis, course design

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INTRODUCTION

English for specific purposes (ESP) as a field of research emphasizes its concern on studying the combination between the subject matter and English language teaching which is considered as challenging matter. Accordingly, this field of research attempts to overcome this challenge throughout promoting the development of the teacher's competence, the learner's acquisition, and optimizing methodology.

This research work aims at investigating the ESP situation at the faculty of medicine at Abdelhamid Ibn-Badis University in order to identify the teachers' of medicine needs regarding English and to select the most important elements in designing an appropriate ESP course that meets their needs. Therefore, the objectives of this paper are: (1) to offer practical guidelines of the needs analysis process in order to identify the different needs of the teachers of medicine, (2) to choose the elements to be integrated into the suggested course to make it effective and suitable to meet the teachers of medicine needs.

The objectives above help us to think about the way the ESP practitioner should proceed to conduct a relevant process of needs analysis in order to design a consistent ESP course for medical professionals in an academic environment. In this vein, our paper tends particularly to explore two questions which are: (1) what do medical professionals at Mostaganem University need English for? (2) What are the components that should be accounted for an appropriate ESP course which is dedicated to teachers of medicine?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The ESP course design is based on the identification of the learners' needs and the interpretation of their analysis as McDonough (1984, 29) writes: "The idea of analyzing the language needs of the learner as a basis for course development has become almost synonymous with ESP." Accordingly, it has been taken into consideration four types of analyses that belong to the process of needs analysis. They are the Target Situation Analysis (TSA), the Learning Situation Analysis (LSA), the Present Situation Analysis (PSA), and the Means Analysis (MA). According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), target situation needs are the needs in relation to the

situation in which the learner will work in (the professional domain). These needs are divided into three types: necessities, lacks, and wants. On the other hand, the present situation analysis is described as the learners' current strengths and weaknesses; more clearly, they stand for what the learners already know (Dudley-Evans and John, 1998). Before that, Holliday (1982, 5) puts forward the analysis of the environment where the course will be held that is means analysis. All the factors in the environment are not considered as obstacles, but rather as relevant features. As far as the learning situation analysis, it is related to the analysis of the learning needs. Robinson (1991, 7) defines learning needs as "...what the learner needs to do to actually to acquire the language." Hence, learning needs are related, mainly, to the learning styles and strategies. In relation to language learning styles, Willing (1994, cited in David, 2011) identified four major styles: communicative, analytical, authority-oriented and concrete. These styles were derived from learner strategy preferences.

The four analyses, previously mentioned, pave the way to what is called course design. Needs analysis is the essential step in ESP course design since the latter relies on it to sequence the lessons to be taught in order to meet the learners' needs, goals, and expectations.

METHOD

In this paper, the needs analysis process is taken as an approach to ESP research where the interpretation of its results will help in suggesting a course design. To investigate the teachers' of medicine needs for English, the needs analysis has been divided into four analyses: the Means Analysis, the Present Situation Analysis, the Target Situation Analysis and the Learning Situation Analysis. Accordingly, a triangulation method is used: (1) the questionnaire: it is divided into 3 parts: part I is dedicated for the Means Analysis (MA), part II is dedicated for the Target Situation Analysis (TSA) and part III stands for the strategy needs analysis, (2) the observation, and (3) the interview: both the qualitative and the quantitative analysis of the results were taken into consideration.

CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

This research takes place at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis' faculty of medicine. It has been created four years

ago (12th September 2012). Its infrastructure is still recent and it has a serious need for medical English courses to promote its teaching and learning. The trainees represent the sample of the study in which their needs will be analysed and the course will be dedicated. They are medical professionals who teach medicine at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND ANALYSIS

The data collection tools of the present study are designed to discover the different needs that push the medical professionals at Abdelhamid Ibn-Badis University to learn English. The subsequent part will deal with the analysis of the learners' questionnaire alongside with the interview for the

responsible. As far as the observation is concerned, the learners will be observed in order to have direct data about them. Finally, the interpretation of the results will be used to suggest a course for the teachers of medicine.

THE MEANS ANALYSIS

At the beginning of the academic year (15th October, 2016), the trainees were given the first part of the questionnaire to be answered. The questions were about their names, age, speciality, and function. Table 1 illustrates the detailed information about the profile of the trainees' group under investigation (the participants).

Table 1. The trainees' profile

Respondents' Number	Age Group	Qualification	Modules in Charge of
3	37-43	Doctor specialised in surgery	General Surgery
2	39-45	Doctor specialised in Anatomy	General Anatomy
2	30-32	Pharmacist	Pharmacology.
2	35-43	Engineer in Biology	Biostatistics
1	37	Doctor specialised in physiology	Neurophysiology, Semiology

The group under investigation (sample) consists of 10 trainees. Their age group is between 30 to 45 years, and their specialities are distributed in the following way: surgery, anatomy, pharmacology, biology, and physiology. All of the trainees are teachers at the faculty of medicine and they are in charge of several modules.

THE PRESENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

In order to identify the strengths and the weaknesses of the trainees regarding the language, a placement test is prepared to identify the current level of the learners. Moreover, the placement test is consolidated with a classroom observation to validate its results.

THE PLACEMENT TEST

A placement test was prepared at the very beginning of the course (23rd October, 2016) in order to identify the learners' strengths and weaknesses as regards to their level of general English. According to the London School of English (2017), it is necessary for a learner who is intended to take a course in medical English to attain the level 5 to 8 in general English that corresponds to the categorisation from intermediate to upper intermediate (see appendix A.1). Hence, the group of the learners under investigation were given a placement test which consists of 100 questions to determine their level in general English (see appendix A.2). Figure 1. illustrates the results.

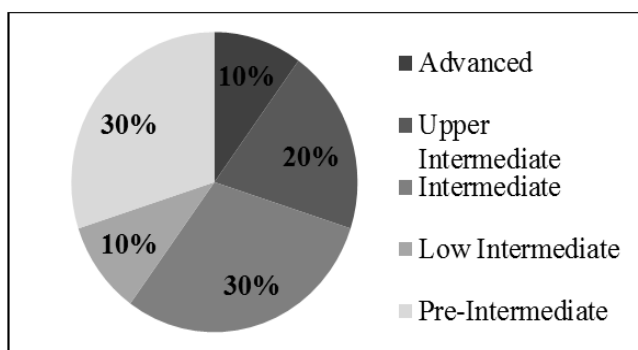


Figure 1. The Learners' level in general English.

The results reveal that (50%) of the learners are intermediate to upper intermediate. However, a considerable proportion (40%) goes to the mixture of low-intermediate to pre-intermediate and only (10%) of the learners were advanced. The placement test helps the ESP practitioner to predict the learners' level that is needed to launch the medical English courses.

THE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

The classroom observation is a useful tool to collect interesting data about the present situation of the learners. Such type of information helped in gaining direct and truthful insights about the learners' strengths and weaknesses. The learners were observed for a period of four sessions (from 23th of October to the 23th of November). At the beginning of the observation process, the observer noticed that the learners' proficiency level is compatible to some extent to the placement test's results. The learners who scored well in the placement test were comfortable in using English while the learners who did not score well were facing various difficulties. Some notes about some behaviors that occurred during the observation step have been recorded. The learners consulted each other in an attempt to understand what was being said by the teacher and tried to translate it to French. The low-intermediate learners could not answer the teacher's questions as they were unable to construct a correct sentence, or to correctly pronounce difficult medical lexicon. Despite this fact, the learners frequently asked the teacher about the right pronunciation of the words. In the pre-medical courses, we could record some instances of the learners' linguistic difficulties.

The results retained from the placement test and the classroom observation, are organised into two different needs: strengths and weaknesses that represent the present situation analysis.

A) Strengths

The strengths of the learners are summed up into the following points:

- Medical professionals have a positive attitude vis-à-vis English and are well aware of its importance, for this reason they were quite motivated.
- They have a considerable amount of specific English terms (jargon) which have a kind of affinity with French words.

- They can make simple sentences and can understand the main points of a conversation.
- They are open to the lecture and to the teacher so they attempt to formulate correct sentences.
- The ICTs which are provided by the administration might be of a great help to improve the learners' linguistic macro skills.
- Part of the group has a good level at general English which will help in learning medical English.

B) Weaknesses

The following points represent the weaknesses of the learners regarding learning English:

- The learners are too busy to continue attending the ESP course regularly.
- They have problems with complex vocabulary, new technical words, their pronunciation, and they struggle with negative transfer.
- They have problems with complex grammar and they fail to make themselves understood.
- They face difficulties in constructing correct sentences using the correct tenses.
- They do not have a significant prior knowledge of the basis of the English language concerning the four macro skills.
- Part of the group still have a low level of English, hence the heterogeneity of the group is highly challenging.

THE TARGET SITUATION ANALYSIS

This kind of questionnaire was carefully prepared in English and it has been translated into French to avoid any sort of misunderstanding. The questionnaire consists of (22) questions of different types: closed, mixed, and open. The 10 trainees had to answer the prepared questionnaire which was submitted to them after 2 sessions they took in general English (October, 2016). The data obtained from the medical professionals' questionnaire were highly important and enabled us to get a clear picture of the target situation and helped us to determine the learners' wants, lacks, and necessities. The learners' needs regarding the (TSA) are as follows:

A. Lacks

The results reveal the following lacks:

- i. The lack of prior knowledge of the language functions deficiencies.

- ii. The lack of exposure to authentic English in a non-academic context (mainly general English)
- iii. There are lacks in listening and speaking skills mainly in the medical domain.
- iv. The lack of reading in the medical domain due to their busy schedule.

B. Wants

The Learners' wants are determined as follows:

- i. Prioritising the reading skills
- ii. Increasing the course duration (4hours/week)
- iii. Reading scientific articles
- iv. Writing medical texts
- v. Deciphering native speakers' speech
- vi. Improving the four linguistic skills simultaneously

C. Necessities

As far as the learners' necessities, they are represented in the following points:

- i. Fostering and developing their linguistic, communicative and intercultural competencies.
- ii. Listening and speaking skills are to be developed so as to be able to ask and answer.
- iii. Focusing more on the academic English (teachers of medicine) and less on English for practitioners (doctors).
- iv. Minding the specificity of the language to some extent (more or less).

THE LEARNING SITUATION ANALYSIS

It is naïve to base the course design and the whole ESP program merely on target needs. Subsequently, learning needs are linked with the route to the destination set by the target situation. The

administrative and the psychological needs must occupy the same space in needs analysis as the target needs do. For that reason, a questionnaire was submitted to the learners in order to identify their learning strategies to elicit their learning styles. Moreover, an interview was addressed to the responsible of medical English at the faculty of medicine to identify the administrative needs.

STRATEGY NEEDS ANALYSIS

The group under investigation was given the questionnaire part III which involves 22 items where the learners have to answer with the following terms: No, Little, Good, Best. Each item stands for a strategy which indicates a learning style. The items are organized as follows:

Item 1 to 5: the different strategies that are linked to the authority-oriented learning style.

Item 6 to 10: indicates the analytical learning style.

Item 11 to 15: they stand for the communicative way of learning.

Item 16 to 20: these learning strategies represent the concrete style of learning.

The figure 2 displays the results retained from the learners' answers:

Generally speaking, the learners adopt a mixture of learning styles; they opted for a variety of learning strategies. However, the learners' strategies show that they are communicative learners at the first place in addition to having an authority-oriented learning style. In the same time, learners tended to be analytical and concrete with the same rate.

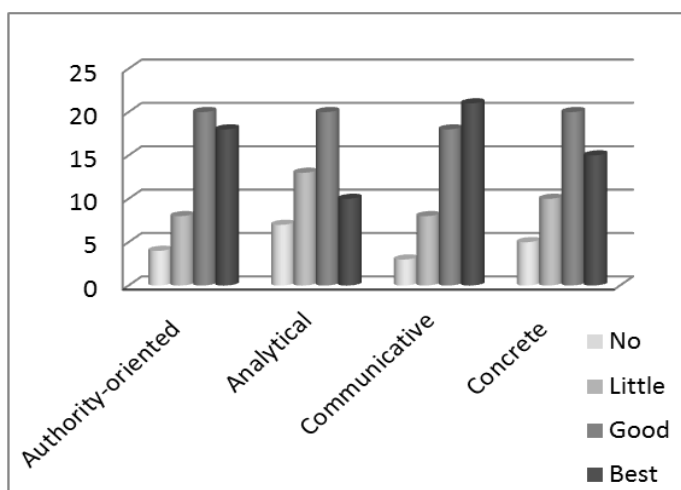


Figure 2. The distribution of the learners' learning styles.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS ANALYSIS

In order to determine the administrative needs, an interview was addressed to the responsible of the training in English for medical professionals to investigate the way she wants it to be. The interview comprises seven (7) questions; each will be dealt with separately.

Question 1: it inquiries about the time allocated for the training.

Question 2: it deals with the reasons behind creating the EMP courses.

Question 3: it is concerned with the targeted objectives of the training.

Question 4: it intends to discover the expectations of the responsible regarding the courses.

Question 5: it looks for the suggestions to enrich the up-coming courses in English.

Question 6: it inquiries about the materials that can be offered to the ESP practitioner.

The responsible's interview yielded an interesting result that will determine the destination of the learning process. According to her, English is needed basically to enrich the teachers of medicine's professional career and regarded as a solid link with up-to-date medical research. Subsequently, medical courses should aim at enhancing the learners' academic English that is based on the understanding of the medical articles and making the learners active communicators in the international conferences.

SUMMARY OF MAIN RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: FROM THE NEEDS TO GOAL

The first part of the questionnaire, which tackled the means analysis, enabled us to get the information about the context in which learning will take place. It has been found that all of the learners are teachers of medicine at the University of Mostaganem and they are in different ages, specialties, and in charge of different modules, for that reason the course design has to respect the learners' specialties and linguistic needs. Regarding the present situation analysis' results, some learners are illegible to study medical English since the results of the placement test and the classroom observation confirm their respective level which is from 5 to 8 as recommended by the London School of English. However, the other part of the group still has not the required level. In this respect, the courses have to be general at the beginning, yet they must be contextualized in order to take into consideration all the levels of the learners. In addition, to have an in-depth data about the learners' strengths and weaknesses, we consolidated the placement test results with a classroom observation which revealed the learners' weaknesses in grammar, vocabulary,

and pronunciation, yet their openness to the lectures and the teacher as well. Through the second part of the learners' questionnaire, we investigated the medical professionals' target needs. Results revealed that a considerable proportion of medical professionals are intermediate, yet they still face great barriers in acquiring the language because of the long period during which they stopped learning it. However, learners assert that in this era, English has become the language of science, and assume that its command is synonymous with career advancement and scientific progress. They; therefore, show a positive attitude towards the language. They see that the first skill which has the priority to focus on is reading followed by the writing skill, then speaking and the last is listening. Additionally, the informants encounter great difficulties in speaking and listening which is due to the lack of reading, the insufficient period of instruction and the lack of practice. For this reason, most of them want to have 4 hours of English instruction per week and agree on the importance of teaching the receptive skills especially reading alongside with the productive skills.

The present situation analysis data which were obtained from the medical professionals' questionnaire (part III) were highly important and enabled us to get a clear picture of the learners' learning styles and strategies. The results show that the learners express their will for a communicative style. However, they prefer also the authority-oriented style of learning that is mixed with the analytical and the concrete one. Subsequently, the results of the responsible's interview are focused on teaching the medical English that serves the academic

research, therefore, all the four skills are highly stressed in a way that makes the teachers of medicine communicatively competent.

As far as the learner's acquisition development is concerned, a good way to make learning faster is to take advantage of the learners' prior knowledge of the subject matter and exploit it to teach the general English as well as the specific one (Mohammad R. K. et al., 2016, 39).

A SYLLABUS CONTENT FOR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

Stevens (1977, 90) describes ESP courses as: 'those in which the aims and the context are determined principally or wholly not by criteria of

general education but by functional and practical English language requirements of the learner.” White (1983) indicates that the syllabus is a plan for a journey which must specify the destination and the starting point and negotiate the route. In fact, the theories to syllabus design are multiple. In this paper, we attempt to design the general picture of the course. Accordingly, an eclectic method is taken to delineate the course of medical English for teachers of medicine at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University. For that reason, one in this part tries to give guidelines or an overall picture of the syllabus taking into consideration the needs analysis’ results. Subsequently, the decision as to which syllabus type to opt for will result from the combination of the learners’ needs and the objectives of the course.

Mohammad (2014, 38) mentions in his work that the specific needs of the learners are the elements that determine the methodology used in ESP teaching which is based on a new learner-centered approach to English language teaching. In the same vein, Esmail (2017, 40) added that the learners’ needs have to be considered in a target-oriented prospect (the professional domain) in order to be interpreted to a course. As a matter of fact, the learners in this study are professional doctors and in the same time academic teachers of medicine. Hence, based on Robinson’s (1991, 3) classification of ESP branches, the type of ESP course that will be delivered in this paper is a kind of mixture between English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) post-experience and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) post-study which is an independent course.

Since the training of English will last for two years, the medical syllabus, in one’s opinion should be divided into three parts; the first part is to bring their background knowledge about the language by focusing on general English in context. It aims at refreshing their memories and revising what they forget due to the long period since they stopped learning English. It is also about general communication skills such as making introductions, greeting, and congratulating. It should be said that at this stage, the ESP teacher should focus on the receptive skills then the productive ones since the learners as general practitioners do read medical texts, but are invited to international conferences as well.

The second part is about basic medical terminology acquisition, grammar structures learnt within the listening skill, then the reading

one, and oral translation. It is about general health topics in their domains divided up according to their specialties: physiology, anatomy, surgery, pharmacology, and biology. Later on, further themes are to be introduced in the syllabus. By the end of the second part of the syllabus, learners will be acquainted to some extent with medical terminology and simple grammar rules.

As for the third part of the syllabus, the learners are supposed to have gained a certain degree of language proficiency, to be able to read and listen to a text and understand it and to know the basic medical terminology. Now the syllabus objectives are to make them fluent communicators by focusing on developing the productive skills coped with translation activities of specialized terminology. It is about training them to structure their research papers and presentation skills required for international conferences including complex and very difficult medical terms, acronyms, and abbreviations. For instance, learners specialized in surgery will learn only the terminology related to surgery, this will ease the task for both the teacher and the learners to efficiently prepare them to engage in successful spoken and written exchanges in their studies and professional careers.

CONCLUSION

Being able to understand English enables the medical professionals to be up-to-date with the recent scientific researches. For that reason, we emphasize

the need for Algerian medical professionals, more specifically, teachers of medicine at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University and the medical students as well, to learn English. In fact, our medical doctors’ struggle in conferences to understand the talks or to speak

with foreign colleagues, therefore implementing a course for medical purposes becomes compulsory.

This paper aims at designing and implementing an ESP course which is dedicated to the teachers of medicine at the Faculty of medicine. It represents an attempt to analyze the needs of medical professionals regarding English in the academic context. Accordingly, this paper gives practical steps to help ESP teachers in conducting the needs analysis process and structuring their courses. It is based on the needs analysis to check the medical professionals’ strengths and weaknesses, their target

needs, and their learning strategies and styles. Based on the previous analysis, we attempt to suggest a course for the teachers of medicine at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University. The needs analysis results reveal that medical professionals show a high degree of motivation and enthusiasm to learn English. The needs analysis' results were, in fact, interpreted to a suggested course for medical purposes to improve the present situation of the learners, help the teachers of medicine overcome the difficulties they face in English, and make learners grasp the necessary knowledge and exploit the limited amount of time to achieve their objectives.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A1. Professional English recommended levels by the London school of English

Course	Level
Medical English	Level 5 – 8
English for Human Resource Professionals	Level 5 – 8
Effective Lecturing Skills	Level 6 – 8

Appendix A2. Language level scale by *cef - the common European framework of reference for languages.

Level	LSE Class Level	CEF level*
9	Very Advanced	C2
8	Advanced	C2
7	Pre-advanced	C1
6	UpperIntermediate	B2
5	Intermediate	B1
4	LowIntermediate	B1
3	Pre-Intermediate	A2
2	Elementary	A1/2
1	Beginner	They do not speak any English.