An Investigation into Students' Academic English Language Needs: The Case of Third Year-LMD Technology of Communication Students at Saida University

تحقيق في احتياجات الطلاب الأكاديمية في اللغة الإنجليزية: طلبة السنة الثالثة ليسانس تكنولوجيا الإعلام والاتصال- جامعة سعيدة

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RÉSUMÉ

This study investigates the English language needs of the students enrolled in the Technology of Communication, faculty of Sciences of Technology at Saida University where they study Scientific English terms based on their needs. To undertake this investigation, a descriptive approach is conducted, basing on two distinctive questionnaires. The study aims at finding out academic English language needs from the perspectives of the students and that of the content teachers in hope of being able to propose well-founded curricular recommendations for a scientific English course at the Sciences of Technology faculty of Saida University.

Keywords: Content teachers; curriculum-; ESP-; target needs; technology of communication.

ملخص البحث

تبحث هذه الدراسة في احتياجات اللغة الإنجليزية للطلاب المسجلين في كلية تكنولوجيا الاتصال، كلية العلوم التكنولوجية بجامعة سعيدة، حيث يدرسون المصطلحات العلمية باللغة الإنجليزية بناءً على احتياجاتهم. لإجراء هذا التحقيق، يتم إجراء نهج وصفي، بناءً على استبيانين مميزين. تهدف الدراسة إلى معرفة احتياجات اللغة الإنجليزية الأكاديمية من وجهة نظر الطلاب وتلك الخاصة بمعلمي المحتوى على أمل أن يكونوا قادرين على اقتراح توصيات مناهج جيدة الأسس لدورة اللغة الإنجليزية العلمية في كلية العلوم التكنولوجية بجامعة سعيدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مدرسو المحتوى ؛ منهاج دراسي ؛ الإنجليزية لأغراض علمية ؛ الاحتياجات المستهدفة ؛ تكنولوجيا الاتصال.

Lougha - Kalaam / Language and Communication Laboratory / U. Relizane – Algeria

1. Introduction:

This study investigates the English language needs of the students enrolled in the Technology of Communication , faculty of Sciences of Technology at the university of Moulay Tahar- Saida . In that faculty, new branches are elaborated such as Technology of Communication, Electronics, and Opto-electronics. So, students in these branches study Scientific English, technical terms, based on their needs. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is considered as a trend of learning English as a second or foreign language with a strictly utilitarian aim. The core of ESP is learners' needs. So, English language teaching professionals often focus on responding to the needs of their learners. Specifically, asking questions about learners' reasons for learning a language has moved the field of TESOL. Moulay Tahar University of Saida, among other things provides its students with English necessary for their academic purposes. Students who attend some faculties at Saida University have academic English language courses designed to them. These faculties are Sciences of Technology, Economy and Commerce, Political Sciences. The Technology of Communication students, for instance, study the English language; it is presented in about 01 hour and 30 m per week. So, less importance is given to that language. Thus, this study is considered as an initial step for developing a curriculum for the Technology of Communication section at the Sciences and Technology faculty, university of Moulay Tahar, Saida. Then, this research attempts to find answers to these research questions:

- *To what extent is the English language course relevant to the Technology of Communication students?*
- *What are Technology of Communication students' lacks?*
- *What are the academic English language needs of the enrolled students of Technology of Communication at Saida University?*

In consistent with the research questions, the following hypotheses are undertaken:

English is an important module in the learning process of Technology of Communication students.

- English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is learnt to fulfill the demands of the students enrolled in Technology of Communication.
- If the teaching of English for specific purposes at the Faculty of Sciences and Technology, University of Dr Moulay Tahar, Saida follows some strategies of predetermined objectives, the students' achievements would be enhanced.

The researcher is basing his research on:

    a- The enrolled students of Technology of Communication

    b- Their Content course teachers.

2. ESP Genesis and Background

2.1 The History of ESP and its definition

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a branch of applied linguistics, that focuses on relating the teaching and the learning processes to the learners' needs. The ESP approach originated to fulfill the demand by many learners around the world who needed to learn English to have access to science, technology and economical resources.

ESP is an approach which uses needs assessment as the basis for curriculum development. Hutchinson and Waters (1987:19) define ESP as:

    " An approach to language teaching, course design and materials
       development in which all decisions as to context and methods
       are based on the learners' reasons for learning ".

The purpose of ESP is to provide learners with the competence to cope with a specified set of tasks in order to achieve occupational or academic targets. Similarly, Johns and Dudley Evans (1991) state that the emergence of ESP is rooted in three main reasons: internal communications, transmission of science and technology, and international communications.

2.2 The Major Branches of ESP

Hutchinson & Waters (1987), ESP is broken down into three branches:
- English for Sciences and Technology (EST).
- English for Business and Economics (EBE).
- English for Social Studies (ESS).

Each of these subject areas is further divided into two branches:
- English for Academic Purposes (EAP)
- English for Occupational Purposes (EOP).

2.3 Needs Assessment

Hutchinson α Waters (1992) define needs assessment on the basis of "necessities "and "wants". In order to classify between what the learners have to know and what the learners feel they need to know. The focus here is on the «lack » that represents the gap between the required proficiency in the target situation and the existing proficiency of the learners.

The notion of Needs Assessment or Needs Analysis (N A) was firstly introduced by Brown (1995). Soriano (1995) in his turn, indicates that needs analysis (needs assessment) collects and analyzes data to determine what learners " lacks " and " needs " to learn while an evaluation measures the effectiveness of a program to meet the needs of the learner.

2.4 Needs Analysis in EAP

The design and implementation of any curriculum for EAP courses should take into consideration the different language needs of the target learners. For Weddel and Duzer (1997), needs analysis is just like a tool used to examine the kinds of English and literacy skills required by the learners and at the same time to identify the literacy contexts of the target language in which the learners will function, what the learners want and need to know to function in those contexts and what they expect to obtain from the instructional program.

Wei and Flaitz (2005) report that in conducting needs analysis to identify students' academic language needs, researchers can collect data to identify the tasks students will encounter in university content classrooms and also to analyze the skills the students need to perform those tasks successfully.

3. Sampling and Data Analysis Procedure

3.1 Participants

In this study, there are two groups of participants. The first group is made up of the third year students of the Technology of Communication students, at the university of Saida .The second group is made up of the content course teachers, teaching these students. There are about 25 students at the Technology of Communication students section, the researcher chooses 10 students among those learners, so as to conduct his questionnaires, and about 04 content course teachers for the same purpose, but with a distinctive questionnaires.

3.2 Data Analysis Procedure

In this research, the investigator adopts descriptive, qualitative, quantitative analytical and statistical research types and methods for data analysis. Concerning classroom observation and the structured interview, the investigator resorts to the qualitative analysis due to the nature of information which has been collected. However, quantitative (statistical, analytical) analysis is

undertaken for both questionnaires (enrolled students and ESP teachers). The findings , therefore, will be presented via graphs , tables , charts and so on , using the Microsoft Excel

3.2.1 Analysis of Classroom Observation

As it has been stated before, classroom observation is a direct research tool that enables the investigator to gather authentic data and features about what is happening in the teaching situation. This technique can reinforce and ensure the understanding of the goal of the ESP situation.

Since the reform occurred in the curricula of the higher education by adopting the LMD system, a crucial importance is given to the English language, in each field of study according to the needs of the students. To shed light on this phenomenon, the researcher has attended series of sessions at Sciences and Technology faculty for the sake of knowing what is happening in an ESP teaching situation, and also to investigate the academic English language needs of Technology of Communication students.

**Table.** Preliminary data gathered from classroom observation.

The Observed Points.	Shortcomings
*- Teachers	*- No ESP teachers, no training in the field, unwilling sometimes to teach.
*-The Presented Lessons.	*-short tasks about grammar, gap filling and tenses sometimes.
*- The Students	*- unwilling to work, absent-minded learners.
*- Timing	*- No fixed timing , it depends (01 hour)and(45mns), sometimes (30 mns) and rarely (01 :30 mns)
*- Attendance	*-Teachers miss their sessions due to their duties in their secondary or elementary schools. *-Some students do not attend their lectures. Even they are in the class, they are not interested (playing with their mobiles, listening to music ….

Along with about four to five classroom observation sessions, the investigator has noticed many negative points which can discourage the teaching of ESP to the Technology of Communication students. The outcomes are presented below:

• Lack of English textbooks: There are no designed textbooks to the students of Technology of Communication, so how can the teacher identify the Academic English language needs of his / her learners if no references or textbooks are available?

• Unavailability of ESP teachers: The Algerian university miss the ESP Practitioners, just volunteers from the elementary or the secondary schools tend to teach only such courses of English and not ESP.

• The English teachers, supervising the students of Technology of Communication rarely speak English with their learners i.e. these teachers use Arabic or French besides a bit of English. So, no academic English needs can be attained since the session is enrolled in Arabic at about 42%, while English 33 % and the rest for French with a proportion of 25%.

Another remark which has been observed is the English course it often starts late, it means neither teacher, nor the students are punctual, the English course begins at 01 :15 pm and not at 01 :00 pm, it is just a grammar activities (tenses, articles , prepositions), only a few times gap filling tasks with supplied items , and a part of the lesson, is wasted in gossiping (free talking time, taken from the English session).

**Fig.1.** The English course subdivision.
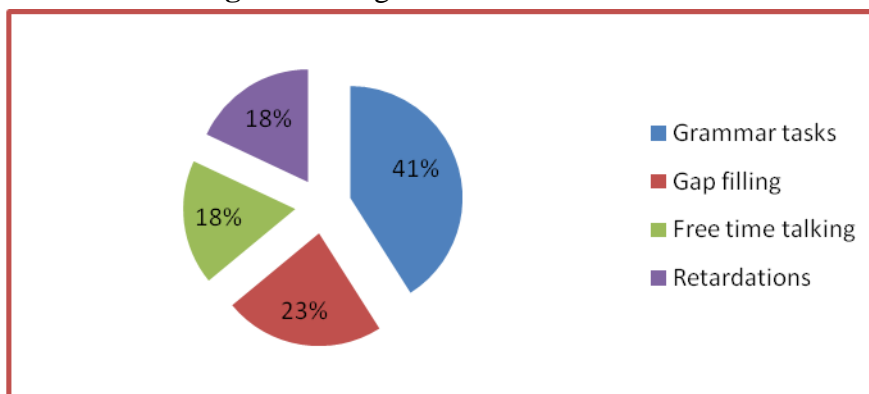
3.2.2 Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

Q1: the students' self-assessment of the content of their current English course:

The researcher asked the informants about the content of their current English course and how they found the English they learned; three distinctive responses emerged. Three participants with a percentage of 12% considered that their lectures are "poor and boring", 5 informants, representing 20% of the respondents, stated that the English that is presented to them is "interesting and authentic", while 17 participants (68%) saw that the English course is "less motivating". The following figure clarifies these findings:

Fig.2. The learners' self-assessment of the English course.
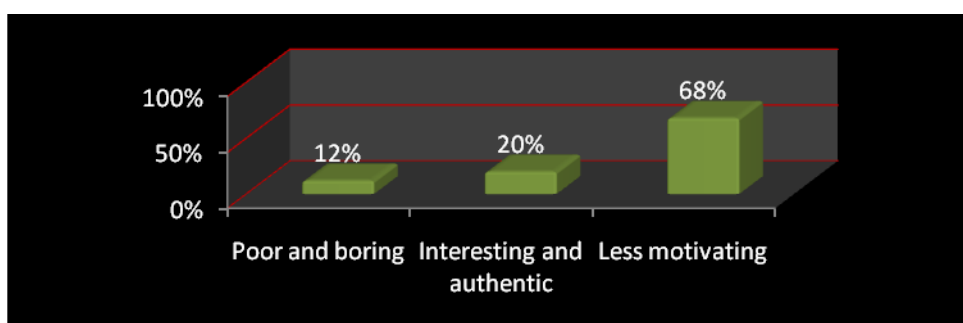

Q2: The enrolled students and their attitude toward taking an ESP course:

Technology of communication students welcomed the idea of studying English, which meets their academic needs. The researcher however questioned them if they were interested in taking an ESP course while studying English. In the first place, the participants did not know what was meant by ESP. After a concise clarification, the informants got an idea about the notion ESP. So, they expressed their satisfaction about taking the course, rather than General English repeated tasks.

Analytically, 24 of the participants agreed to take ESP courses, basing on their needs, whereas only one informant did not grasp the idea of studying ESP. The figure below indicates what was attained:

Fig.3. The learners' attitude toward taking ESP courses.
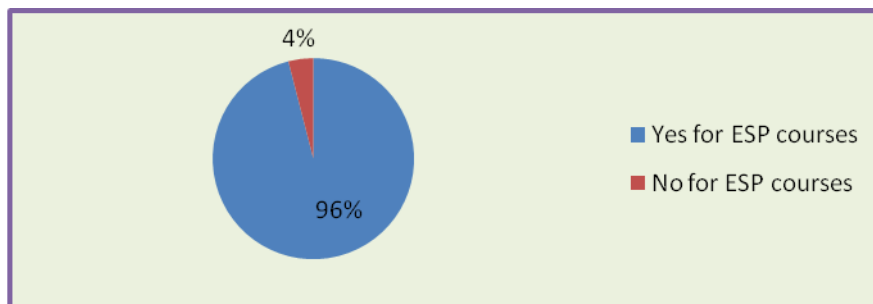
After a period of investigation and observation, the investigator has deduced   many unsatisfying points that the enrolled teachers at the faculty of Sciences and Technology are complaining from, these shortcomings   can be summarized as follow:

- Teachers of Technology of Communication cannot make more efforts   with their learners owing to their duties with their pupils at the secondary or elementary schools.
- The carelessness of the Technology of Communication students and   their disrespect to their teachers can't encourage those teachers to do their best and love their teaching at the Science and Technology faculty.
- The lack of an ESP syllabus and an ESP textbook perplex the ESP practitioners, they present random teaching points, which do not match the learners' specific and academic English needs.
- The belief of the students that English is just a secondary subject or   module makes them heedless and less motivated, and this leads to a gap between those learners and their ESP teachers.
- The use of repeated and meaningless tasks often bothers the students; teachers repeat the same instructions and tasks because they have no official syllabus to guide them.
- Teaching general English to the enrolled students of Technology of Communication does not go with their needs, that is to say these learners had better study specific English and technical terminology that serve their field of study.
- The content course teachers at the faculty of Sciences and Technology   do not master the ICT and the technological devices of communication as the (Data show), so they teach things virtually, using old techniques. Indeed, what those ESP practitioners present to their learners does not correspond to what they really need.

4. A Proposal of Tentative Solutions:
4.1 The Shortcomings of the Teaching / Learning Process
Generally speaking, it was supposed that the students of Technology of Communication studied specific, and scientific English that goes with their academic needs, that is to say the English course that reflects the needs of those learners, and fulfills the lacks of those students. But in fact, the investigator acquainted with teaching English. It is general in its form, and random activities in its content.

Theoretically, the enrolled students study ESP, rather than general English, in which the ESP course bases on the needs of the learners, or what is known by Needs Assessment , it means the ESP practitioner in the four language skills (Listening , Speaking , Reading , Writing) has to tackle his / her courses according to the wants and the lacks of the learners; scientific texts and their tasks, speaking about technologies, inventions and communication.

Practically, the investigator got astonished and dissatisfied from the quality of the English course presented to those students. i.e. timing of the English was not respected neither by the

ESP teacher, nor by the learner, both came late, the content of the English course did not match the students' academic needs.

4.1.1. The Negative Attitudes of the Institution towards the ESP Subject

The researcher noticed many weaknesses not only in the ESP subject, but also shortcomings in the ESP practitioner's profile, and other secondary factors like the restricted timing, lack of assiduity on the part of both teachers and learners, and so on.

Firstly, no one of the four ESP teachers is qualified enough to teach ESP, all the four respondents have only the (BA). Those teachers are not permanent ESP teachers. As a result, these teachers cannot identify the learners' needs.

Secondly, the content teachers taught with no syllabus to follow. The ESP teachers teach their students unplanned teaching points, they do not respect such a syllabus, designed to their learners. Consequently, their aim cannot be attained because no specific academic needs are identified.

The Ministry of Higher education has to elaborate ESP textbooks, ESP dispatches, ESP syllabi, and ESP curricula. These elaborations are efficient due to many reasons:

• The ESP curricula enlighten the ESP teacher what to present to his / her students and how to perform the ESP courses.

• The ESP textbooks enable both teachers and students to be involved in the learning / teaching processes.

• The ESP course book facilitates ESP teaching to the teacher, it also helps the ESP practitioner with the amount of the input, and gives various choices of texts, tasks to the ESP practitioner.

• ESP elaboration makes ESP teaching and learning urgently needed and amazing.

Thirdly, as it has been stated before , teacher's mobility is another challenge toward ESP improvement because the ESP practitioners are not permanent teachers. They move teaching from a faculty to another. Here the quality of ESP teaching will not be good, and the students' needs will not be identified too. Indeed, this mobility prevents the ESP practitioner from performing his / her role appropriately.

4.1.2 Pedagogical Considerations

The content of the ESP course does not convene with the demands of the Technology of Communication students, because it is not effective, not instructive and of course, not objective.

The ESP teachers at Saida university stressed two integrative skills rather than the other two language skills , Similarly, the students of Technology and Communication do not care about the four skills and their integrations in their learning, they see that some skills are more important than others, and such skills should be omitted from their learning because they do not understand them in one side and on the other side they think that these skills are not instructive.

4.2 Suggestions for Improvements

After investigating the ESP teaching / learning situation at the faculty of Sciences and Technology , identifying the shortcomings , the weaknesses in the ESP subject, and analyzing the attained data, it is necessary to propose some tentative solutions for the sake of eradicating the negative attitudes in ESP teaching and learning processes, and improving the quality of students' perceptions and teachers' performances.

4.2.1 The Pre-requisite of an ESP Practitioner

The ESP teaching – learning process cannot be improved, unless serious remedies and radical changes are taken into account. The ESP practitioner is the source of knowledge, and instruction provider. Therefore, prerequisite measures have to be seen in that ESP teacher, he or she should be knowledgeable, an experienced enough not only in EFL teaching, but also in ESP subject too. ESP practitioner should play a determining role in teaching ESP, by adapting effective criteria, which can be resumed as follow:

(Class management - Seriousness in teaching and assiduity - The good command of the ESP subject – Timing - Team teaching and collaboration - Improving the ESP teaching - The good relationship between teachers and students)

4.2.2. The Change in the Students 'Attitudes towards English Teaching

The students' lack of awareness to the courses which they are exposed to, the researcher notices that the enrolled students in the Technology of Communication field are not motivated, they do not collaborate in the teaching – learning process. These flaws are concluded below:

- Lack of interest on the part of the students, the learners do not give importance to their English courses, they consider that language as a supplementary subject compared to Math or Physics.
- Lack of assiduity and punctuality, some students often come late, they do not attend their lectures in time.
- The students' reliance on their mother tongue while communicating with their teachers. They do not pay the minimum effort to speak English or even to utter simple terms in English.

**5. Suggested Solutions by the Researcher**

- The good management of the ESP class, the teachers of ESP have to perform their roles perfectly and appropriately by giving importance to their learners, assessing their works, organizing the way they give answers to tasks, instructing them and so on.
- Implementing the idea of studying the foreign languages in general, and English in specific because this idea stimulates the learner and helps in changing his or her attitude toward English learning.
- Sensitizing the students about the necessity of English learning in their carriers.
- Encouraging the students to speak English even they make mistakes because « Practice makes perfect » .
- The effective interference of the ESP practitioners to combine and link the students ' primary subject , their field of study with the ESP subject.

5.1 The Change in ESP Course

As it has been shown in the investigation, there were no ESP courses, designed to the students of Technology of Communication, even those learners expressed their dissatisfaction about the content of their ESP courses, because the so called courses do not reflect their needs. There is no agreement about the quality of the English course , presented to these learners, all what was taught to the students grammar activities, verbs to put in the past tenses. The teachers do not provide their learners with topics and texts that go with their field of study, the situation is really dramatic. As a matter of fact, there should be a change in the content of the ESP course, which should be objective, stimulating, reflecting the needs of the learners because the rupture and the huge gap is in the ESP course and its content.

Accordingly, the ESP course design has to be reviewed and renewed to meet the students' academic and specific needs, it has to cover all the four language skills, it has to be simplified and well elaborated .

Fig.4. Parameters of an ESP course.
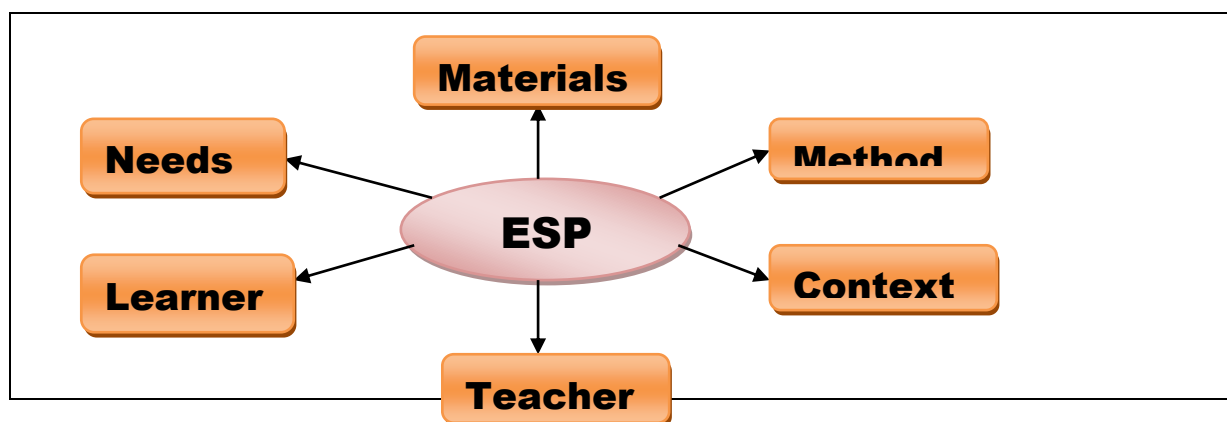
5.2 The Role of the Institution

To sum up, the implementation of an effective ESP institution does not only increase the learners' motivation to learn English, but also foster the enrolled students' learning and achievement. A successful institution advocates the collaboration of the notes below:

- Using up-to-date materials are more stimulating and instructive.
- The content of the texts should be interesting and relevant to the ESP students' needs.
- ESP books should be elaborated to sensitize learners about the field of their study in one side, and on the other side to learn targeted subjects that meet their specific and academic needs.
- The student's basic English needs should be given much importance by improving the learner's general proficiency while teaching specialized English.
- The level of the ESP book should match the student's level of proficiency.
- Given the time allocated to ESP classes (one hour and a half), it is difficult and sometimes impossible to cover the real academic needs of the learners.
- Learners 'communicative competences and their abilities should be developed according to what is presented to them as ESP courses.

5.3 The Role of the ESP Course

The ESP course is the link that gathers The ESP practitioner and the learner. The ESP course is the third major step in the ESP teaching / learning processes. This ESP course should comply with the learners' academic needs. According to Carter (1983) the ESP course stands on three major features: a) authentic material, b) purpose-related orientation, c) self-direction.

Indeed, effective ESP course typically exploit some samples of authentic language use and encourage genuine communication; their content is relevant to the students' purposes but needs not to be highly specialized; the material presented there, is more or less up-to-date and concentrates on developing the skills necessary for the students' efficient functioning in the target language in their professional surroundings.

Eventually, a good ESP course should prepare learners for using the language in real-life situations by setting tasks that are likely to occur in their professional environment. This ESP course must be built on and extends the foundations for accurate communications.

5.4 The Role of the ESP Practitioner

The teacher whether in EFL or in ESP is considered as an important partner in the teaching process, this instructor is the bridging gap between the ESP subject, the ESP syllabus and the student.

ESP or EFL teaching needs training, before starting teaching, because the pre-teaching stage contributes to promote the teacher 's skills, and helps to extend the knowledge of that educator.

The ESP practitioner is the knowledge provider; he or she is the educator, the assessor, the controller, the organizer, the facilitator, the director and the orienting, (Dudley Evans, 1988).

The ESP teacher is an artist, a creator; he or she designs courses according to the learners' specific needs and their wants, using authentic materials. the ESP practitioner's responsibility stands on major elements, which can be resumed as follow: (Setting goals and objectives - Organizing courses - Creating a learning environment - Evaluating the students).

5.5 The Role of the ESP Learner

The ESP learner is the targeted element in the teaching – learning process because all the ESP approaches, their methods, their techniques, the ESP syllabus, the ESP courses are all set up to fit and to enhance that learner's perception, aiming to meet his or her academic needs.

To sum, the ESP learner the stock of knowledge and the vital box of the ESP courses. This learner also shares a part of that responsibility in the field of ESP teaching and learning process, the student's responsibility depends on three factors : Focus for learning - Subject matter knowledge - Adult learning strategies.

6. Conclusion

As it has been said before, this work attempted to determine the academic English language needs of the target group by considering a wide range of audiences as defined by Halliday and Cooke (1982), Brown (1995), Jordan (1997). This research was also conducted with the guiding perspective provided by the Target Situation Analysis concept of Hutchinson and waters (1987).

It is vital to indicate the position that each member of the participants occupy in the English teaching /learning processes. Firstly, the enrolled students of Technology of Communication expressed an urging demand of English with its varied forms. These learners however considered learning English is strictly for a utilitarian objective. The same learners required pure scientific English that reflects their needs and their wants.

The ESP teachers in their turns were also a part of those processes of English language teaching and learning. Those ESP practitioners were supposed to suggest authentic ESP texts for their learners, by presenting all the four integrative language skills (Listening – Speaking – Reading – Writing), for the sake of involving the learners in the ESP learning process, basing on their academic needs. But in fact, things went wrong, no punctual teachers, no permanent ESP teaching in that faculty and sometimes in the mid of the academic year, those ESP teachers moved to another teaching job since they were part time practitioners.

Finally, this analysis entitled « An investigation Into Students English Language Academic Needs» at the faculty of Science and Technology has shown shortcomings rather than advantages, concerning ESP teaching. This investigation has brought more questions than answers. As a result, it is high time consistent researches and interesting studies would be necessary to overcome the difficulties of the English for Specific Purposes to Technology of Communication in special and the Sciences and Technology learners in general.

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6. Appendices
6.1 Appendix: Classroom Observation
Ministry of Higher Education.
Faculty of Sciences and Technology.

Section of   Technology of Communication.
Academic Year: 2021- 20212.

Class Observation Form :

The Observer: **Teacher:**
………………….…………   …………….….………
The Observed Points :
- Teacher's qualification: ……………………………………………..
                          …………………………………………………

- The presented lesson : ………………………………………………..
                          …………………………………………………
                          …………………………………………………..

- The students :
          *- Number: ………………………………..
          *- Motivation: ………………………………..
                          …………………………………………
          *- Punctuality: ………………………………..

          *- Collaboration: ………………………………………..
                          …………………………………………..
          *- Perception:…………………………………………
                          …………………………………………

- Timing: …………………………………………………………………
          ……………………………………………………………………
- Attendance :
          *- Teachers: ……………………………………………..
          *- Students: …………………………………………………

- Comments and Remarks: ………………………………………………..
                          ………………………………………………..
                          …………………………………………………
                          …………………………………………………

6.2 Appendix: A Questionnaire Administered to Technology of
          Communication students:
I- The English Course Content:
   Question: What skills and tasks are you often exposed to during the
          English course? ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯➔
a- Grammar tasks ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯➔   …………
b- Gap filling ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯➔   …………
c- Matching pairs ⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯➔   ………….
d- Acting out dialogues ⎯⎯⎯⎯➔   ………....
e- Other possible answers   …………
II- Learners' assessment to the English Course:

Question: How do find the content of the English Course?

Authentic and interesting	……………………………
Less motivating	……………………………
Poor and boring	……………………………

III- Implementing an authentic ESP course:

Question: Do you consider an implementation of an authentic ESP course is so prominent in your studies?

Yes	No
……………..	…………