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**Exploring Algerian University Teachers' Attitudes Towards Materials
Development in ESP Course Design: The Case of English for Business Purposes**

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Abstract:

This present research aims at exploring In-field teachers' attitudes on materials development in ESP Course Design at Algerian universities. Given that materials should meet the objectives of the assigned course, we sought to highlight the non-alignment between ESP course and desirable ends set by the authorities in-charge. Therefore, 08 ESP teachers from the Department of Commercial Sciences at the University of Laghouat took part in this study. The findings suggest that there exist challenges facing teachers in developing materials that are relevant, appropriate and tailored which cater for stakeholders' aspirations. Also, institutional constraints seem to influence attitudes of teachers towards material development. A structured questionnaire was delivered by means of Likert scale to assess the level of agreement and disagreement to the previously mentioned ends.

Keywords: Teachers' attitudes; ESP course; Materials development; Business English.

Introduction

Particularly in the field of English for specific purposes, materials development has gained massive popularity in the last decade as it is regarded a central issue in English language teaching. In fact, many universities around the world have begun to offer specialized courses. This study serves as a roadmap to teachers seeking to get an insight on how materials selection, adaptation and adoption influence students' performances.

While ESP course design addresses the linguistic needs manifested in business and professional contexts, the choice of materials remains a determining factor of either their success or failure. In such circumstances, our ethical endeavor lies in shedding light on the factors that influence teachers' choices, challenges and their implications on ESP courses. Thus, the alignment of ESP courses and materials design and development contribute immensely to the objectives set by decision makers and ultimately optimization of students' professional development.

According to Tomlinson, materials in language teaching are:

Anything which is used to help to teach language learners. Materials can be found in the form of a textbook, a workbook, a cassette, a CD-ROM, a video, a photocopied handout, a newspaper, a paragraph written on a whiteboard: anything which presents or informs about the language being learned. (Tomlinson, 1998: xi)

The previously mentioned quotation encompasses spheres of ESP courses as well. However, ESP practitioners are not only responsible for the selection of materials for their classroom use like all EGP purposes but also, they are held responsible for their design, development and evaluation since "publishers are naturally reluctant to produce materials for very limited markets" (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 106). It is worth mentioning that this distinction has given ESP teachers the denomination of practitioners (Robinson, 1991).

In this vein, ESP teachers are mindful about the importance of relevant materials because they permit students to have a grasp on how language in a particular discipline is used, in other words, they are sources of "the real language" (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998)

Problematic

How do teachers perceive and approach the process of materials development in ESP course design and what factors influence their attitudes in this regard?

Methods

The descriptive study conducted here is meant to qualitatively investigate and analyze teachers' attitudes per materials development in ESP course design. It encompassed the total of eight (08) teachers of ESP varying in gender and experience. Data were gathered by means of a Likert -based questionnaire and then analyzed differentially to best capture attitudes of relevance to the case being. As Kothari (2014) stated " a research design is a plan that specifies the sources and types of information relevant to the research problem", qualitative research provides more systematic grounds to obtain clearer insights on thoughts, beliefs and opinions of the target population.

Research Questions

There are three (03) major questions regarding this given study:

- 1- What sort of attitudes do teachers have towards materials development in ESP course design?
- 2- Are there any challenges teachers face when developing need-specific materials for their ESP courses?
- 3- What effects do institutional guidelines present for ESP teachers?

Hypotheses

This study is based on three major hypotheses:

- 1- Teachers hold positive attitudes towards materials development aligning with ESP course designs.
- 2- A great many of teachers may have challenges facing them in developing materials appropriate to specific Learning contexts.
- 3- Institutional recommendations burden teachers ' choices and practices in processing rigid materials development in ESP course design.

Objectives

In this paper, we will seek to explore teachers' in-depth attitudes on materials development in ESP course design. This should extend to the myriad of possible challenges confronted whilst targeting learners' specific needs and their relation to policy makers choices.

Ethical Considerations

The present study deployed eight (08) university teachers for whom concerns of anonymity and consent were granted. All actions throughout this research were based on their permission. Besides, they were informed about the relevance of each step and intended roles for them. Withdrawal from the research at any given time was guaranteed for them.

1.English for Specific Purposes

Some scholars define ESP as simply being the teaching of English for any purpose that can be specified while others tend to be more specific in the sense that they see it as the teaching of English for professional or vocational purposes.

The definition of ESP According to (Dudley-Evans, 1998)

1.1 Absolute Characteristics

1. ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners
2. ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves.
3. ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre.

1.2 Variable Characteristics

1. ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines
2. ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English
3. ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level

4. ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students.

2. Needs Analysis in ESP Course Design

Brown (2016, 4) interpret needs analysis in ESP as “the systematic collection and analysis of all information necessary for defining and validating a defensible curriculum” the latter is considered to be the very heart of ESP Course design as it reflects the aspirations of stakeholders and teachers to cater for students’ professional and vocational objectives. In other words, it refers to the exploration of the student’s actual and target communicative ability. Surprisingly, Scholars like Hutchinson, Waters, West and Robinson translate needs analysis differently. There may be labeled under wants, desires, necessities, lacks, gaps, motivations, deficiencies, requirements, requests, pre-requisites, essentials, $x+1$ (x =what the students know already). It mainly raises debates over course design on the following matters:

1. What English language skills do students lack and that they will need the most in their future work?

2. What are the language skills and activities much emphasized in ESP classes for a specific category of students

3. How do teachers perceive ESP course design at a specific college or center.

4. Do needs analysis reflect stakeholders’ perceptions and objectives vis-a-vis expected future jobs of the students.

3. Materials Development

Some teachers understand by materials in language teaching as the textbook but in fact it means so much more than that. They may refer to a variety of electronic, paper based and realia (videos, DVDs, emails, YouTube, dictionaries, grammar books, readers, workbooks or photocopied exercises. They could also be newspapers, food packages, photographs, live talks by invited native speakers, instructions given by a teacher, tasks written on cards or discussions between learners), as Tomlinson suggests

Materials may fall in four categories:

instructional in that they inform learners about the language.

experiential in that they provide exposure to the language in use.

elicitative in that they stimulate language.

exploratory in that they facilitate discoveries about language use (Tomlinson 2001: 66).

Developing materials takes a practical procedure in teachers' attempt to contextualize any form of language input, adapt them to fit and meet the required course objectives while the theoretical framework sits a basis for potential ESP practitioners to be informed by the recent updates. Such practices to reform the ESP teaching scene highlight the importance of addressing these questions whenever we sketch an ESP course (Tomlinson 2001: 66).

what should be provided for the learners?

how it should be provided?

what can be done with it to promote language learning?

4.ESP Teacher Profile

One of the very complex teacher profile is certainly that of the ESP one as they are entitled to understand the type of learner they have and the demands of the professional market and the learning environment dealt with. ESP teachers must exhibit language and teaching skills beyond the linguistic needs of the matter. In this view, developing materials pertinent to ESP course designs is not at the reach of whoever is in charge of teaching them. In the case of Laghouat University, most of ESP teachers newly master's degree graduated who lack enabling experience of tackling all ESP course dimensions. Only two (02) of the teaching staff are specialized in the subject matter. Naturally, this situation would constitute lack concerned with perceptions and practices with regard to materials development. Dudley Evans (1998) stated that a regular English language teacher works in tandem with a field specialist deciding course goals, selecting suitable materials and perhaps even teaching classes together. Swales (1990) objected by claiming that institutional politics, differing expectations make team teaching impractical and field specialist may monopolize decision despite their limited knowledge of ESP in general.

5. Attitudes in ESP teaching

While it is thought provoking to think of the future of ESP methodology and its practical undertakings in this rapidly changing world, attitudes of ESP teachers are also regarded major in shaping the learning / teaching process. In other words, teachers' perspectives and practices on the nature of the

course, methodology, procedures and techniques naturally influence the likelihood of intake and meeting the end objectives. It is worth mentioning that the number of opportunities available for in-service ESP teachers to get trained are very limited since the latter has been given attention very recently.

In the absence of subject field specialists, teachers as being entitled material developers as well find difficulty to pick, contextualize and adopt materials that are relevant to the course objectives. Besides, there is a sort of dilemma among teachers on who is most suitable to teach ESP, whether subject specialists or regular language teachers as the latter sometimes find difficulty to understand the material fully, so they will be translating their comprehensive thoughts that might not be in harmony with the real sense. Meanwhile, the subject field specialists might also fail to transmit their cognitive knowledge in the best linguistic formula possible. Anthony (2011) argues that the best position to teach the learners are specialist ESP practitioners. He further explains that “the target products that learners require can vary dramatically and evolve rapidly over time, especially after the learners enter the workplace” (Anthony, 2011, p. 3).

6. Results

Table 01: Informants Profiles

		Label	Frequency	Percentage
Experience		1-5	05	62,5%
		6-10	03	37,5%
		11- above	00	00%
Gender		Male	06	75%
		Female	02	25%
Age		23-30	06	75%
		31-38	02	25%
		39-46	00	00%
Specialty	ESP	/	01	12,5%
	EGP	/	06	75%
	Other	/	01	12,5%
	PhD	/	02	25%

Degree				
	Master	/	06	75%

The information extracted from participants revealed that they varied in all mentioned aspects. Only two (02) teachers are of specialized backgrounds while the rest six (06) of them are of very limited in-field teaching experience. They also varied in age, gender and degree.

Table 02: Beliefs on Materials Development in ESP Course Design

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
ESP course design effectiveness is determined by establishing custom materials	0%	0%	0%	25%	75%
I am positively influenced to engage in materials development with attachment to my teaching experience	0%	0%	25%	25%	50%
I have received enough training to develop materials tailored for ESP instruction	75%	0%	0%	0%	25%
Group collaboration in Materials design promotes the qualities of ESP course materials	0%	25%	25%	50%	0%

Findings indicated that the majority of 75% of teachers considered strictly the effectiveness of ESP course design in the success of creating custom materials, only 25 % fairly agreed on this statement. The same percentage of them is positively impacted to engage in the process of materials development. However, up to 75% of teachers haven't received enough training to maintain the development of materials. Also, 50% takes colleagues collaboration as valid to the promotion of ESP course materials.

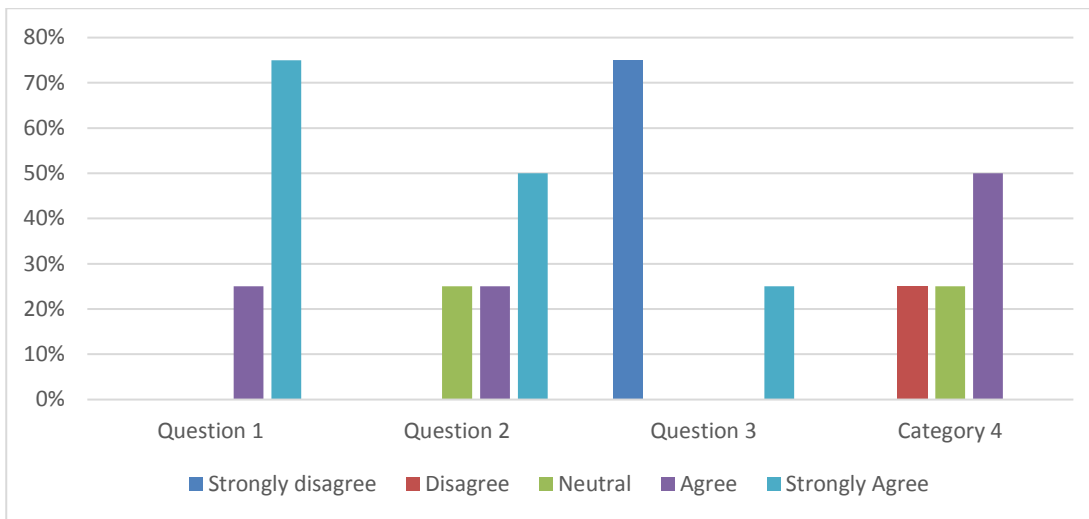


Figure 01: Beliefs on Materials Development in ESP Course Design

Table 03: Views on ESP Course Design

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The context of ESP influences greatly my views towards course design	0%	0%	75%	12,5%	12,5%
I believe MD should meet the ESP course objectives	0%	0%	25%	50%	25%
Investing time in Md positively impacts the quality of ESP course	0%	0%	12,5%	75%	12,5%
Students learning outcomes in ESP is tied to valid investment in Materials development	0%	0%	50%	0%	50%

Investigating this aspect, 75% of teachers believed that the ESP context affected their opinions on materials development. Only 50 % considered meeting the objectives of course design through materials development as vital and necessary. In the same sense, the great majority of 75 % expressed that investment in materials development impacts the outcomes of their ESP course design while 50 % were neutral on whether students' success is determined by investment in materials development.

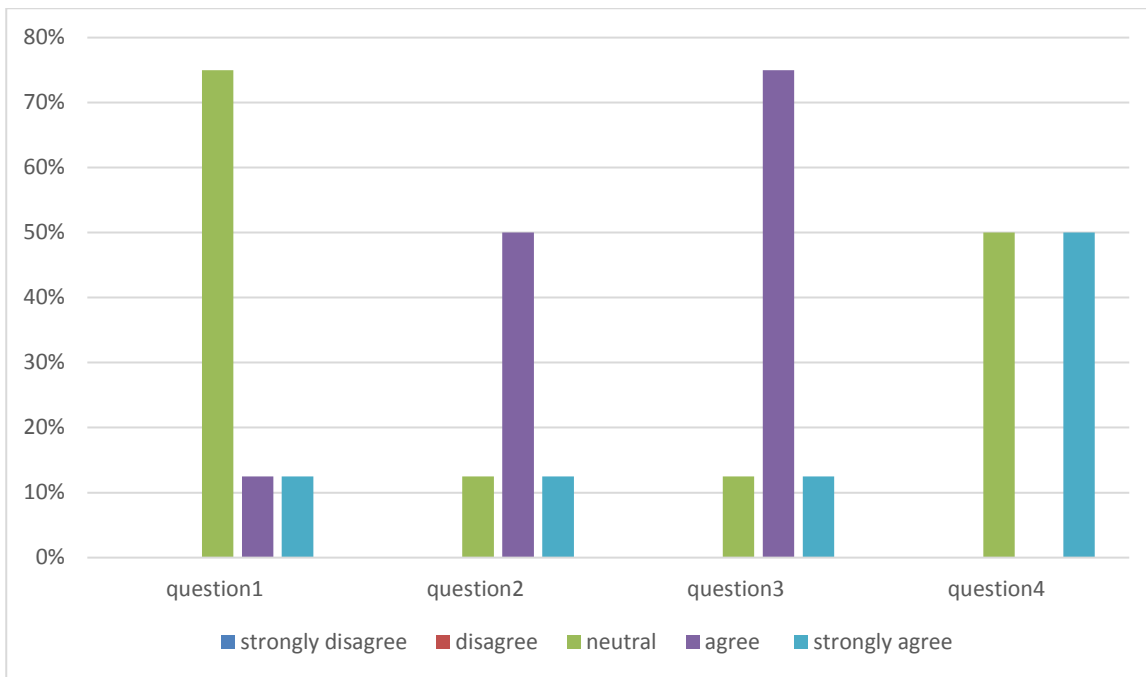


Figure02: Views on ESP Course Design

Table 04 :Challenges in Processing Materials Development in ESP Course Design

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Institutional guidelines provide support for the ESP teacher to engage in MD	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
I perceive that IG impact positively the ESP teacher freedom in developing specific materials for the course	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
I feel confident in my capacity of understanding institutional guidelines related to MD in ESP course	0%	50%	0%	0%	50%

The sum of all teachers, 100 % strongly disagreed on institutional guidelines as means of assistance to them. 50 % of the teachers, as well, felt unconfident in their ability of coping up with the merits institutional guidelines present.

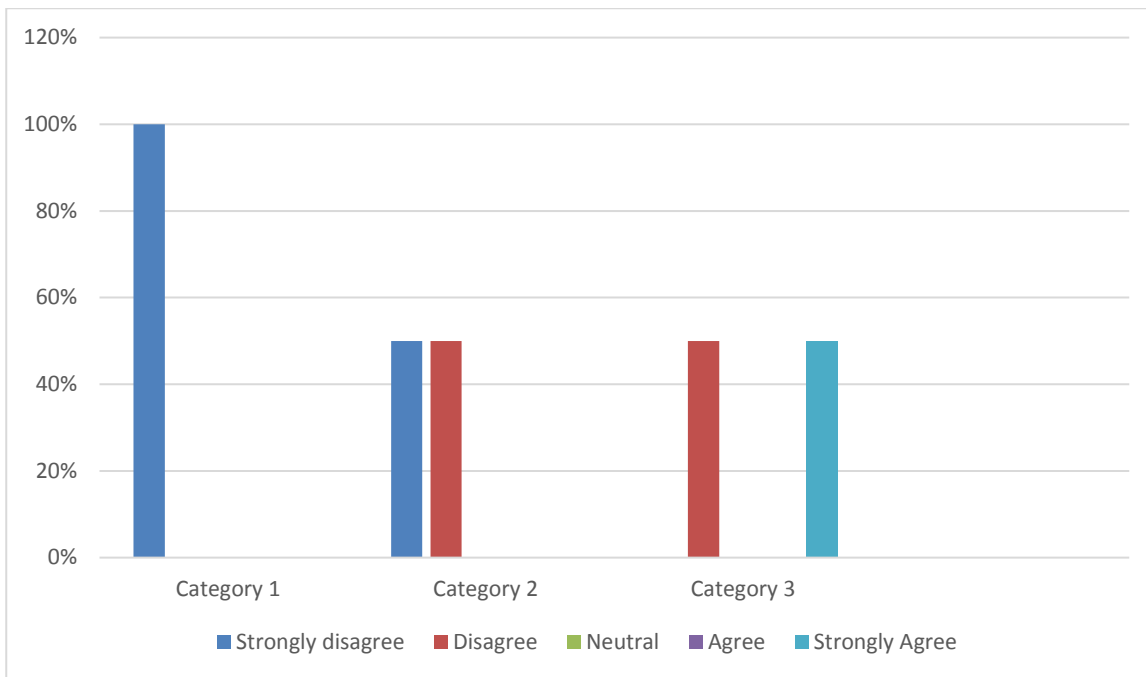


Figure 03:Challenges in Processing Materials Development in ESP Course Design

Table 05:Reaction to Challenges in Materials Development

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I make attempts to alleviate difficulties in the process of MD in my ESP course design	0%	0%	0%	75%	25%
I receive enough support from my colleagues dealing with issues in MD in the ESP course design we share in the faculty	0%	25%	50%	25%	0%
I try to use multiple strategies to develop better materials in ESP course design	0%	0%	0%	75%	25%
I feel concerned when I face hardships either in MD or performing my ESP course	0%	0%	0%	75%	25%

Most teachers 75% favorably noted that they made trials to lessen the difficulties facing them develop materials to their ESP Course Design. They, at around a 50 % rate, do not enjoy support from their fellow teachers. 75 % of

teachers stated that they deployed differing strategies for better materials development and that they felt concerned with the challenges they faced in this regard.

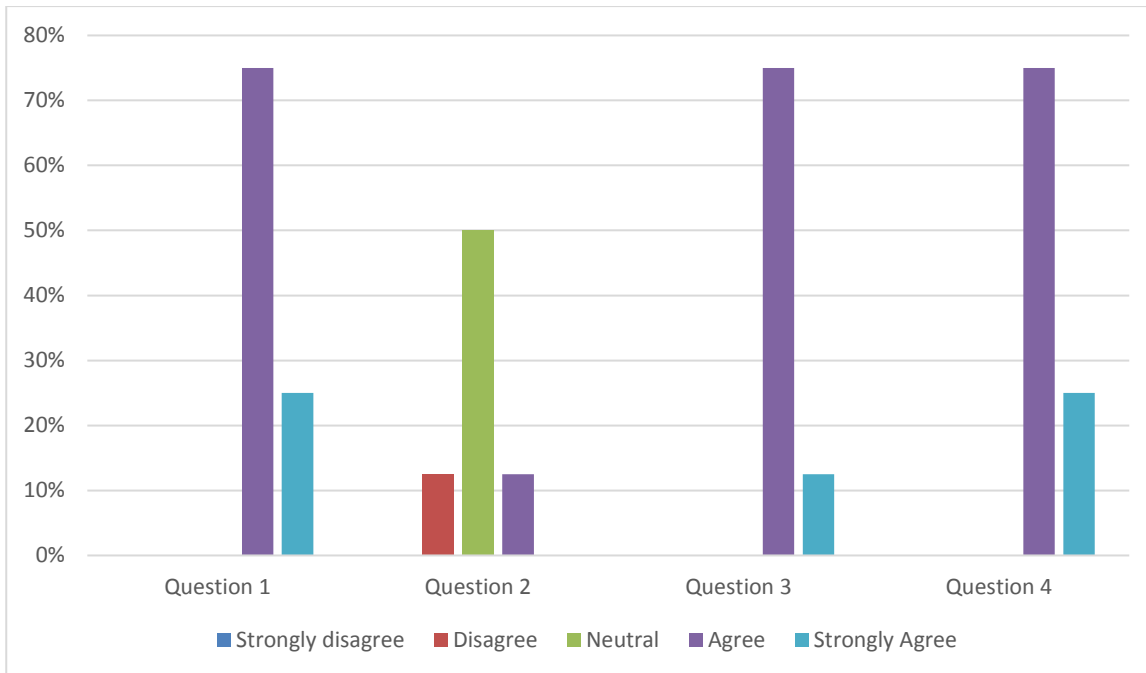


Figure 04: Reaction to Challenges in Materials Development

Discussion

This actual study aimed at exploring teachers' attitudes towards materials development in ESP course design. It intended to unveil essential insights on the views, opinions and beliefs teachers have on the topic. Data were gathered by a questionnaire administered to ESP teachers of Laghouat University's Department of Commercial Sciences. Results revealed that teachers varied in age, background and in-field experience. The majority of the sample had fair awareness about the relevance of materials development to ESP course design and thereby is willing to engage constructively in the developing custom materials in ESP courses under supervision.

On what concerns course design, half of the population expressed lack of understanding on the existing relationship between materials development and ESP course design. This suggested that the insufficiency of specialized training affected how they conceive ESP as distinguished from other branches of English language teaching. In the same vein, the same share of teachers lacked reason on

the salience of investing time and resources in materials development while designing or delivering ESP courses.

This mixture of opinions led a considerable number of teachers to be confronted with challenges directing them to believe that institutional guidelines serve as of no encouraging assistance to their practices which in turn brings about lack of self-confidence to cope up with the teaching mission as properly as it shall be done. Nonetheless, a fair percentage of the teachers still managed to react to the given difficulties regardless of the complexity of the subject matter.

Limitations

Over the process of conducting and finalizing this research, a number of limitations have been experienced including the limited sample size and therefore having concerns of non-generalizability. Still, valuable results are provided. Further and more diverse research is recommended into the deeper aspects of the topic. This way, more valid and generalizable findings can be presented on the reality of materials development in ESP course design at the Algerian university in general which can lead to better understanding and more effective teaching experiences in turn.

Conclusion

Teachers, as central element in the language learning process, play a major role in designing effective materials for Business English courses. Their attitudes and preferences for certain types of materials were thoroughly examined. Insightful results were gathered throughout our exploration of teachers' attitudes in relation to materials development in English for specific purposes course design. The contribution of such research may deepen one's understanding on the nature of teaching ESP in Algerian universities. The findings of this research highlight the importance of tailoring materials in ESP to match stakeholders needs and students' personal desires in business English.

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