

## **Teaching English for Specific Purposes in Administrative Sciences:**

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### **1. Introduction:**

The Administrative Sciences Field (ASF) was developed under certain conditions and with some specific characteristics. Although the ASF is different on several aspects compared to the other scientific fields such as physics and chemistry, it can be comparable to these fields on the sociological aspect. The contextual characteristics of ASF, which represent in our opinion a sociological phenomenon, have major impacts on the modes of production and validation of knowledge as well as on the field's structure. The major characteristic of the ASF is the multidisciplinary aspect of its members as they **are coming from diverse disciplines such as mathematics, physics, industrial engineering, economics, sociology, psychology and anthropology** (Aouni, 1996). Following the industrial revolution distinct departments such as production and operation management; marketing, finance; human resources management and accounting, were established within the enterprises. Moreover, new phenomena such as the industry emergence, the product diversifications and the market expansions have appeared requiring more management segmentation in corporations. In spite of the fact that the ASF disciplines are interrelated, we notice that the terminology used in each discipline is distinct. This diversity in the use of jargons makes teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in this field a complex and challenging task. The learners' needs in each discipline are different. Even the economic meaning and interpretation of some terms can be different from one discipline to another. For example, the terms goal and objective in management science and human resources disciplines have different meanings or connotations. In decision-making theory, the goal is an aspiration level that the Decision-Maker can set for a specific objective. However, these two terms are equivalent in human resources management discipline.

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Given that, teaching ESP in the ASF is a challenging task, the instructors should be creative in their teaching; flexible with their learners and aware of the different needs to be met. Instructors have to consider the learners' needs in the delivery of the courses' content in order to better communicate and be successful (Aouni and Benabadji, 2005). The content of the ESP courses aimed at ASF audience has to be adapted to the expectation of the administrative sciences learners. The learners' needs are very important to ESP teaching and if the needs are clear, therefore the learning aims can be reached easily. The content of the ESP courses should be appropriate to the learners' needs (Markee, 1984).

The content of the ESP curriculum has to consider the fact that each ASF discipline has its own specificity and the learners' background and their knowledge of English and their motivation are different. This paper shall discuss some issues related to the teaching of ESP in the department of Commercial Sciences at Oran University. First, we will discuss about the instructors. The ESP instructors at this department have not received a formal training in teaching ESP and **they are not also experts in teaching economics and commerce concepts** and terminology related to each disciplines of ASF. Consequently, a need to collaborate with subject specialists and a study of needs analysis are important to meet the learners' needs. In section 3, we will discuss the expectations of the learners and their lack of motivation: a hurdle that refrains the learners from doing their utmost in their learning process at the university. Section 4, will deal with the lack of pedagogical materials. The lack of textbooks is a major difficulty for the instructors of English at the department since they are non-experts in the ASF. Moreover, the absence of collaboration, and the lack of a curriculum makes the teaching of ESP at the department of Commercial Sciences at Oran University a challenging task.

## **2. *Instructors of ESP within the Commercial Sciences Department at Oran University***

English in Administrative Sciences Faculties and Business Schools is generally taught as a compulsory course. Usually, the ESP teaching staff is composed of part time instructors of English. Typically the instructors hold a degree in English studies and are not specialized in the specific subject matter such as the administrative sciences. According to Robinson (1980), often the instructors teach and administrate the ESP without a formal training in ESP field. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) indicate that the ESP instructors should not become a teacher of the specific subject matter, but rather an interested learner of the subject matter. Language instructors do not master the subject matter but they try to supply and provide their learners with different material which help them to read and understand the subject matter and enhance their vocabulary. Instructors working on ESP courses have tried to adapt from general English teaching to ESP.

English has been taught at the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Oran, as a compulsory course. In 1998, the students of the Commercial Sciences department took English in the last two years of their undergrad programme<sup>2</sup> ("licence"). Moreover, three years after, in 2001, the teaching of English was introduced starting from the second year of the licence. This change constitutes a new challenge for the English instructors. The absence of a curriculum has forced the instructors to adopt their own teaching methodology. They have to decide what to teach and which pedagogical material and textbooks to use. We also observe the lack of coordination between the instructors. In fact, we could find two different tests to two different groups taking the same English course. The evaluation of the students was not the same and that was also due to the content of their programme during their academic year. Through the years, the number of instructors of English has increased from three teachers in 1998 to 9 teachers in 2001. This change is due to several factors such as: a) the introduction of English at the Commercial Sci-

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<sup>2</sup> The French term "licence" will be used to indicate the undergraduate diploma in the department of Commercial Sciences at Oran University.

ences department from the second year of the "licence" programme, b) an increase of the number of students in the department, which means more groups, and c) each instructor should have four groups and an eight-hour teaching per week. Normally, the ESP teaching staff is composed of part time instructors of English. Typically the instructors hold a degree in English studies and are not specialized in the specific subject matter such as marketing, accounting, finance or management. These are the four specialities that the students choose in their third year at the department of Commercial Sciences.

Miliani (1986) indicates that the ESP instructors have some freedom to adopt the most appropriate methodology in their teaching. An ESP instructor should be eclectic and choose from the different techniques using his training, intuition, experience and study of the subject. The texts used to teach ESP are selected by instructors with no teaching experience in the Administrative Sciences field. They are given the responsibility to choose and select what to teach without any previous training in ESP. Moreover, instructors coming to teach ESP in Administrative Sciences often get their first teaching experience at the tertiary level.

Another difficulty faced by language instructors, apart from their lack of proficiency and material, is the absence of collaboration. There is no collaboration between the English language instructors and the subject specialists. Collaboration or co-operation between the subject specialist and the language instructor can be helpful more in the learners' target situation. It may allow bridging the gap between the learners' knowledge of the target language and the ESP instructor's ignorance of it (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). Yet, language teachers are the only person responsible for what to teach even if they are not trained to do so.

In fact not only the instructors have difficulties within the Commercial Sciences department at Oran University, but the students also have some difficulties which are related to the learning process. This matter will be discussed in the next section.

### ***3. ESP Learners at Commercial Sciences Department (Oran University)***

Students in the ASF face difficulties to learn and practise English as a foreign language. Since students at the department of Commercial Sciences (Oran University) specialize in a field related to ASF, they do not expect to learn English at the university level. Students' reaction when they get their schedules is one of amazement to see that they will have an hour and a half of English per week during their academic year. They do not show interest toward English for some reasons. In fact, the students have a limited language ability and educational background in the subject matter. Students entering the university and choosing the field of commerce do not expect to study English. Another reason is that the learners are not homogenous. There are large mixed ability classes from complete beginners to intermediate levels. This means that the students' shortcomings are varied between grammar, general vocabulary, scientific terminology and general understanding. The lack of the English knowledge can be related to the field of study in the high school since some students may have studied a different foreign language such as Spanish or German. Therefore, they do not know enough English and that may be a handicap for them to follow the ESP course. Another reason for their deficiency is due to their low interest when they were studying English at the high school. Generally, the attitude of the students towards the English language often leaves much to be desired. So at university, students consider learning English an unnecessary impediment in obtaining their "licence" diploma. They do not feel any need of English and they also know that they can get their degree without good knowledge of a foreign language (Robinson, 1991). Moreover, the students put more emphasize on technical courses which are mainly taught in Arabic such as statistics, business law, marketing and finance. Also, the weight attributed to these technical courses is higher than the weight of English which is only one. This latter reduces the students' motivation to do more and work harder. They prefer to put more energy in a subject matter having a higher weight and then get a better average, than giving more importance to English course. Consequently, the learners' attitude in learning the language is rather hostile than co-operative. Another issue that has been observed at Oran University, is that the

time table of English courses does not suit students. They have English courses either late in the afternoon and then students leave the university or at the end of the week. In both cases, the students tend not to attend all English classes. The laziness of students has led them to find ways to avoid the English classes and find excuses to justify their absence. The time table is not the major of reduced motivation, but it is a contributing factor.

#### **4. *Textbook for Teaching ESP in Commercial Sciences***

The teaching material plays an important role in teaching any subject. Teaching ESP requires that the textbook be appropriate to the specific learners by considering their age, their linguistic background and educational culture. Teaching ESP in the Department of Commercial Sciences needs appropriate teaching materials, yet instructors face the lack of textbooks and teaching materials related to their area of teaching. According to Swales (1980), choosing a good ESP textbook has always been a failure. The failure is mainly due to the inappropriateness of the textbook for the subject to be taught in different areas of the administrative sciences. However, Swales (1980) indicates that it is not that easy for a practitioner to find the appropriate textbook that satisfies all expectations. Moreover, the part time instructors find it difficult not only to prepare what to teach, but to understand the content to be taught. In fact, Hyde (1991) states that every lesson differs with every classroom and it is the role of the instructor to adjust the course and method according to the abilities of learners to whom the course is administrated.

Usually, the ESP instructors at the Department of Commercial Sciences, Oran University, try to collect as many materials as possible to enrich the content of their courses. Most of the content is related to grammar activities. Other activities taught include reading and understanding a collection of texts; explaining vocabulary and scientific terminology; matching words; translation and writing business letters. Usually, the texts are taken from different books; the internet or from magazines like "Forum" and "The Economist". The courses are mainly lecture oriented and with the students is quite low. Consequently, Students are asked to read a business text at home as homework, try to have the gist of it, check the meaning of

words, and try to select the new vocabulary related to the text. Once in class, the instructor adds more activities such as finding synonyms and/or antonyms from the text; explain some sentences and/or illustrate the explanation with an example. Another activity might be a jumbled text that students have to reorder or matching words and putting them into meaningful sentences. Since the learners have different background and motivation, ESP instructors try to meet the learners' needs through their choice of materials and exercises. Moreover, these learners are not homogeneous and the group size may vary between fifty to seventy or eighty students per group each year based on the number of students registered at the faculty.

The field of the administrative sciences like other fields is in a constant change. New concepts are developed and new terminology is used. Yet, the ESP textbooks, when found, are not necessarily updated fast enough to accommodate the needs of learners. Moreover, when teachers have access to these books, they find them not appropriate for the students' needs. The focus here is on the content that even if there are similarities in the field of business, it does not necessarily meet the needs of Algerian students in an Algerian context. Textbooks are edited by foreigners within a foreign context which is not necessarily similar to an Algerian context and business culture. Therefore instructors should be aware of their learners' needs in their learning context. In addition, learners are different each year; their needs are varied; and the teaching concepts and the knowledge of methodology are in a continuous change as well. All these changes should urge instructors to be aware of the necessary and important modifications to be implemented. They should be open to the idea of adjusting the content of the course to match their students' needs, be flexible and make the necessary changes while administrating the lessons. Consequently, if the learners' needs are not taken into consideration, the content of the course will probably be based on unsuitable or irrelevant materials. In other words, students' needs provide instructors with the important foundation on which to construct the new knowledge and shape the ESP course. This provides the instructors with an opportunity and a challenge to be eclectic in using the materials available to satisfy the learners' needs.

Teaching ESP in the ASF is a challenging task. Therefore, the ESP instructors should be creative in their teaching; flexible with their learners and aware of the different needs to be met. They have to consider the learners' needs in the delivery of the courses' content in order to better communicate and be successful. The content of the ESP courses has to be adapted to the expectation of commercial sciences learners. The learners' needs are very important to ESP teaching and if the needs are clear, therefore the learning aims can be reached easily (Aouni and Benabadji, 2005; Zughoul and Hussein, 1985; Markee, 1984).

For many instructors, the selection of the teaching materials is mainly based on their availability. Generally in the commercial sciences field, the ESP instructors are given just few commercial books to consult or use even try to adapt. However, instructors find themselves dependent on the materials they have and use it over and over again. Moreover, these books do not always deal with all the specialities, but just few common ones, such as English for management, English for marketing and English for accounting. Moreover, these books do not fit the context of the target situation. Thus, some instructors face difficulties not only in what to teach, but also to understand the subject to teach since most of them come from an EFL background and do not have an experience in the subject matter.

***Conclusion:***

In this paper we have discussed the challenging tasks of the teaching of ESP at the Department of Commercial Sciences at Oran University. We have pointed out some difficulties in the teaching of ESP in this department. These difficulties are related to the lack of specialized textbooks of ESP. The existing textbooks do not accommodate the needs of the learners of Commercial Sciences. Also, the fact that the learners do not have the same background in English and they have a poor motivation makes the teaching of ESP a challenging task for the instructors. We believe that it is imperative to develop a new curriculum based on the learners' needs and in collaboration between instructors. The new curriculum has to take into consideration both the learners' and instructors needs.



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