



Contents lists available at ASJP (Algerian Scientific Journal Platform)

Academic Review of Social and Human Studies

journal homepage: www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/PresentationRevue/552



Exploring the perceived needs of job-experienced users of English for international business communication

The case of the ENG Directorate-SONATRACH

تقييم احتياجات مستخدمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة تواصل عملي مع العاملين الأجانب

دراسة حالة \ مديرية الهندسة لسوناطراك

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Article info

Historique de l'article:

Received : 30-01-2023

Accepted: 01-05-2023

Keywords:

English for Specific Purposes

Business English

Needs analysis

Job-experienced users

Communication skills.

Abstract

The impact of globalization on the world countries has made Algeria ponder the necessity of teaching English in a corporate setting where its mastery is a condition for recruitment as it holds particular importance regarding the company's business activity. As part of the area of English for Specific Purposes studies (ESP) and Business English (BE) teaching and learning, the present paper reports the results of a needs analysis study conducted with a sample population of job-experienced users of English to explore the use of English at their workplace. The study was an attempt to depict the real needs of 30 engineers from the ENG directorate of the Algerian national oil and gas company (SONATRACH), who, given their different study spheres and occupational activities, use English as a business lingua franca to communicate with their foreign business partners. For qualitative and quantitative data collection, a questionnaire was used, of which the findings revealed the 21 engineers need to develop speaking and listening skills for effective use of English to discuss business issues, such as specifications, deadlines, and planning. This justifies the importance of a tailored BE course placing greater emphasis on the language of meetings and negotiations.

ملخص

إن تأثير العولمة على دول العالم جعل الجزائر تفكر في ضرورة تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في إطار العمل حيث يعد إتقانها شرطاً للتوظيف نظراً لأنها تحمل أهمية خاصة فيما يتعلق بالنشاط التجاري للشركة. كجزء من مجال اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض محددة وتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية للأعمال وتعلمها، يعرض هذه المقالة نتائج دراسة أجريت مع عينة من مستخدمي اللغة الإنجليزية ذوي الخبرة الوظيفية لاستكشاف غرض استخدامهم للغة في مكان عملهم. كانت الدراسة محاولة لاكتشاف الاحتياجات اللغوية لثلاثين مهندساً من المديرية الهندسية للشركة الوطنية الجزائرية للنفط والغاز (سوناطراك)، الذين، نظراً لمجالاتهم الدراسية المختلفة وأنشطتهم المهنية، يستخدمون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة تجارية مشتركة مع شركاء الأعمال الأجانب. كمنهج بحثي لجمع البيانات النوعية والكمية، تم استخدام استبيان الذي نتاجه أظهرت أن عدداً كبيراً من المهندسين بحاجة إلى تطوير مهارات التحدث من أجل الاستخدام الفعال للغة الإنجليزية لمناقشة قضايا الأعمال. هذا يبرر أهمية إجراء دورة في اللغة الانجليزية للأعمال مصممة لهذا الغرض مع التركيز بشكل أكبر على لغة الاجتماعات والمفاوضات.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

اللغة الإنجليزية في إطار العمل
اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض محددة
لاستكشاف غرض استخدامهم.

1. introduction

Nowadays, English has become the dominant global business language imposed by the recent globalization calling for one common language, which in one way or the other has become the utmost because of the trade and investment relationships between the USA and the rest of the world. With contributions that represent around one-third of the world's production, the English-speaking countries' economic dominance led English to become the business *lingua franca*. Therefore, mastery of English has become an ability that helps and facilitates economic exchange, which obviously fueled the interest in its learning. These conditions generated the idea of learning English for business purposes (EBP) also known as Business English; *henceforth*, BE, in relation to the specific business activities that English users perform. Certain activities requiring specific language competence generated the necessity to learn English for specific business purposes; *henceforth*, ESBP, such as the language of business meetings, presentations, and negotiations entails particular emphasis in terms of language use. This requires certain proficiency which is quite different from general English; *henceforth*, GE.

The objective behind BE with particular emphasis on ESBP is to communicate internationally in a successful and effective way and stand for a better chance in a job career. Therefore, we conceive English language competence within the domain of business as an asset that a company staff needs to possess to communicate with foreign business partners effectively. In the case of Algeria, being a producer and exporter of oil and gas and the opportunity for many foreign investments and partnerships, English, which despite its status as the second foreign language (EFL) after French (L2), is the leading language in oral and written communication due to cooperation with both non-native and native English speaking countries. This provides the opportunity to conduct research on the use of the language *per se* as a medium of workplace communication, thereby investigating and analyzing the needs, strengths, and weaknesses of English users, who are, in fact, the engineers working at the engineering directorate (ENG) of the Algerian Oil and Gas Company (SONATRACH) implanted in

Arzew, Oran. This sample population needs English to conduct specific business tasks. Since engineers' job involves cross-cultural communication, they need to develop the right abilities to overcome communication difficulties and become expert users of English in their field of work. The assessment of the engineers' language needs will have implications on the teaching of English for specific business communication in terms of the selection of appropriate content, materials, and methodology to develop learners' necessary language competence and communication skills.

To conduct the research work, one needs to question what language competence and communication skills the engineers need to improve in order to conduct their business activities in English satisfactorily and be able to climb the success ladder. The research question led to the following assumption: the engineers need to improve their speaking communication skills because they do not have the necessary language competence to conduct meetings, negotiations, and presentations appropriately as required by the nature of ENG directorate work tasks. Moreover, the available BE courses provided them with general business knowledge instead of focusing on developing specific language skills for international business communication.

Because communication is the most used skill in almost every workplace, it is an integral part of the business world to maintain business relations with foreign partners. However, people cannot progress professionally if they do not improve their communication ability (**Media, 2010**) and do not master a *lingua franca*. We note the case of SONATRACH, which cooperates with foreign staff from different nationalities and with a different language and cultural background. Therefore, language communication skills ensure business success because effective communicators are able to solve problems quickly, improve stakeholder response, make stronger decisions, enhance a professional image, increase productivity, ensure steadier workflow, and build strong business relationships (**Media, 2010**).

Several studies revealed that English proficiency and business communication skills are highly required in professional settings with an emphasis on the

speaking skill (Abarca, 2010, p. 102). Research proved that workers need English in presentations, negotiations, telephoning, writing reports, writing business letters, taking part in trade shows and overseas training, making sales calls, and explaining technical processes, to cite these only (Holden, 1993) cited in (Abarca, 2010, p. 102). A survey conducted by Yin and Wong (1990) with accountants, cited in (Abarca, 2010, p. 102), showed that English is used to accomplish several business tasks requiring both speaking and writing abilities. English is the language for chairing and participating in business meetings, writing agendas and minutes, getting information and counseling, investigating problems, evaluating alternatives and proposing solutions, inquiring, informing, and selling, giving short individual speeches, team presentations, and selling ideas or services (Dudley-Evans & Maggie Jo St John, 1996).

In this vein, many research works were conducted to explore the use of English in international business used as a common language for business purposes. One can cite the work of (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005) on communication and language use in Nordic corporate mergers. Emphasizing the interactants' language use, communication practices, and cultural views, their questionnaire enabled the study of two of the most frequent communicative events where English was used as a *lingua franca* in internal communication. These were email messages and meetings.

Other studies (Nickerson, 2005) emphasized the use of English as a *lingua franca* in international business contexts. The research investigated written and spoken communication in English, and the work that was performed on specific text genres used by the international business community, such as negotiations, meetings, e-mail, and advertising. The research findings had implications for the teaching of English for Specific Business Purposes. Another work (Nickerson, 2022) focused on the study of workplace communicative genres, such as negotiations, meetings, and e-mails by exploring how English is used for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with reference to the world Englishes framework.

In fact, language competence and good communication skills increase workplace profitability. A study conducted among Malaysian graduates has identified that the high unemployment rate is often attributed to their lack of English proficiency and communication skills (Trading Economics, 2015). Later, (Ting, Marzuki, Chuah, Misieng, & Jerome, 2017) conducted research to examine the employers' views on the importance of English proficiency and communication skills for graduates' recruitment in the Malaysian private economic sector. They found that employers in this sector view language proficiency and communication skills as separate qualities. However, they are willing to consider hiring candidates with average English proficiency if they have good communication skills, except for jobs that require more communication in English such as customer service and marketing. The results also revealed that good communication skills can increase employability and opportunities for career advancement.

For this reason, it is worthwhile exploring the use of English as a *lingua franca* for business communication in the Algerian context by taking the ENG engineers as a sample population. For an in-depth understanding, the paper overviews the circumstances that paved the way to the umbrella branch ESP, prior to examining the characteristics of English in a workplace setting. Given the different fields of learners' specialty, BE is developed as a subfield, which itself differs from one group of learners to another on the basis of their needs, wants, and lacks.

2. English as a Workplace Language

Since the Second World War (1945), several circumstances have favored English to become the international language of science and commerce. These circumstances generated ESP, creating a revolution in linguistics since studies shifted attention from describing the rules of language usage (grammar) to discovering how it is actually used in real communication settings (Widdowson, 1978), which obviously vary from one context to another. In educational psychology, the concern began to concentrate on learners and their attitudes toward

learning (Rodgers, 1969). As claimed by (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 7), “One finding of this research was that the language we speak and write varies considerably, and in a number of different ways, from one context to another.”

ESP is an eclectic approach primarily based on the analysis of learners’ needs for the design of teaching courses and materials (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, pp. 6-8). In other words, ESP is related to the identification of learners’ reasons for learning English by means of a continuous needs analysis process, *henceforth*, NA. This in fact has generated two categories: English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, pp. 5-6). EAP and EOP, in their turn, are umbrella branches for other sub-specialties given the learners’ specialism, needs, age, and motivation, to name these only. The idea of developing ESP has therefore generated several specialized subcategories to meet learners’ needs and their reasons for learning the language among which is BE.

From a linguistic standpoint, the term BE is difficult to define; nevertheless, ESP scholars (e.g., Ellis and Johnson, 1994; Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998) agree on the fact it is a variety of ESP and an umbrella branch of English for occupational purposes (EOP). Viewed in the overall context of ESP, BE shares the important elements of needs analysis, syllabus design, course design, and materials selection and development. In addition, (Ellis & Johnson, 1994, p. 3) conceive BE as “a specific language corpus and emphasis on particular kinds of communication in a specific context.”

As a part of EOP, BE is a large and important variety as it deals with “adult learners working or preparing to work in a business context” (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 53), who aim to be able to communicate effectively while conducting their business activities. Consequently, two BE learners’ categories are identified: pre-experience and job-experienced corresponding respectively to two sub-branches: English for General Business Purposes (EGBP) and English for Specific Business Purposes (ESBP) (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, pp. 55-56), which is the scope of the present study.

2.1 Business English Characteristics

Like all ESP branches, BE is characterized by its context, content, and learners necessitating careful research and design of pedagogical materials and activities for adult learners in need of English for professional purposes (EPP) (Dudley-Evans & Maggie Jo St John, 1996). Some BE courses emphasize the teaching of vocabulary related to fields such as commerce, trade, finance, and economy. Some of them focus on the language needed for workplace communication skills, such as meetings, negotiations, presentations, or written correspondence. Others cover communication topics such as marketing, corporate communication, interpersonal communication, and many others. (Abarca, 2010, p. 104) claims that BE is an approach to teaching English to non-native English speakers “who wish to improve their level of fluency or purposes of greater language functionality in specific areas of business life including technology, marketing, manufacturing, management, finance and business services” (quoting Marlene Ringler, 1997, p. 1).

In general, BE involves work-related English language courses designed and tailored to meet the specific learners’ needs and context requirements. For this reason, BE teachers’ basic concern is to design an efficient, effective, and relevant course that is tailor-made to meet learners’ professional needs. A tailor-made course will bring positive outcomes in terms of learners’ involvement in the course, their motivation, learner/teacher partnership for content resources, and achievement of teaching/learning objectives. To achieve the mentioned BE course goals, a needs analysis process; *thereafter* NA, to map out the learners’ language needs is a prerequisite. As (Donna, 2000, p. 2) notes “investigating, analysing and fulfilling Business English students’ needs is, in fact, so important for the success of any Business English course...”

2.2 Needs Analysis

Given the significance of the BE course design, a large-scale assessment has to be fulfilled at the level of the company to examine the use of English. This is known as a language audit (LA) which can be designed to assess an organization’s strengths and

weaknesses in terms of communication in English (Frendo, 2005, p. 15). For (Huhta, Vogt, & Tulkki, 2013, p. 22) “language audits represent a special type of NA because they are typically carried out within a particular company or organisation and therefore focus on features that are institutionally specific.” LAs are concerned with collecting and examining critically information about the learners’ target profile of language skills (i.e. a profile of the actual activities that have to be performed), and the profile of personal ability (i.e. an evaluation of the language users’ proficiency in performing those activities) (**Dudley-Evans & Maggie Jo St John, 1996, p. 2**). This process enables the BE teacher to manage the language course time to assure connectivity and balance between both profiles.

By the target needs, we refer to the learners’ necessities, wants and lacks as regards the use of English. Necessities include “what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation” (**Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 55**). This kind of information is gathered by observing the situations in which the learner will need to perform tasks followed by the analysis of their constituent parts. As regards learner’s lacks, it is important to identify existing proficiency to match it against the target proficiency, so “the gap between the two can be referred so as to the learner’s lacks” (**Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 56**), whereas the identification of the learners’ wants refers to their view on what their existing needs are. Consequently, any ESP course is based on learners’ needs analysis, which (**Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 122**) conceive as the corner stone of ESP leading to a very focused course.

To obtain reliable data, NA is conducted using questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The obtained results will enable the teacher to have an in-depth understanding of the language use and needs of the employees. Further to the importance of NA in any ESP research study, learners’ language competence raises as a very important element to be considered. Learners’ achievements depend widely on their language ability as ESP courses are meant for foreign language learners with advanced proficiency level. This category of learners, who are in fact job-

experienced, brings business knowledge and skills to the language-learning context. They often need an intensive course carefully tailored with emphasis on one or two language skills and specific business communicative events (**Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 56**).

3. Language and Communication at the Workplace

Communication is very important for people in the world of business. However, foreign language learners encounter difficulties when communicating with others in English, especially if their language competence is limited, but they have to convey their message and sustain the conversation until they attain their communication goal. For this reason, language learners need to develop the required competencies such as knowledge of how to talk appropriately in a given communicative setting (**Saville-Troike, 2003**).

3.1 Proficiency and Competence

Another important issue related to language learning for specific communication purposes in the context of a non-native language learner is language proficiency and competence. For scholars, theoretical linguists, educators, and applied linguists, language proficiency can often refer to competence and performance (**Robinson, 2013, p. 521**). Others conceive the terms [performance and competence] as different in meaning but related to each other on the basis of language and knowledge of language referring to “the ability for learners to master and use a second language in different contexts”. In this context, proficiency is coined with other terms such as ability, skill and capability (**Benatti, 2013, p. 520**).

Other scholars note that in the Chomskyan sense, which is restricted to linguistic competence, proficiency is something more than or something different from competence, with a meaning that is not restricted to the idea of being in a state of knowing a language but extends to the idea of putting language to use (**Knapp, Seidlhofer, & Widdowson, 2009, p. 642**). However, (**North, 2000**) simply views proficiency as being between competence and performance as it refers to the ability to make use of competence and performance.

Considered one of the most important issues in linguistics, early models described competence on the basis of language taking into account mainly the language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). From the Chomskyan view narrowed in the knowledge of the rules of language (**Chomsky, 1965**), the term was broadened to include other factors intervening in language use and learning, emphasizing the ability to use knowledge of the language for communication purposes. Therefore, the concept of communicative competence; *thereafter*, CC, was developed to match the acquisition of knowledge to the ability to use it in different contexts (**Hymes, 1972**).

Related to the basic concept of communication, CC based on the criteria of efficiency and appropriateness is conceived as “the ability to function in a truly communicative setting; that is, in a spontaneous transaction involving one or more other persons” (**Paulston, 1992, p.98**). Further to this conceptualization of the term CC, the objectives of language teaching include the sociocultural rules for language use as an integral part of the language taught (**Paulston, 1992, p. 115**), in other words, the linguistic forms of the language with its social rules, the knowledge of when, how, and to whom it is appropriate to use these forms.

Scholars argued that the knowledge of grammatical rules is not sufficient for speaking a language and for communicating because of the many constraints of which the most important is the underlying ability of the interlocutors (**Rickheit, Strohner, & Vorweg, 2008, p. 15**). Therefore, a construction of CC models was proposed such as the model of (**Saville-Troike, 2003, pp. 18-20**) based on three types of knowledge: linguistic, interactional skills and cultural knowledge. The three types involve respectively, (1) “knowledge of the linguistic codes, such as grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, etc.”, (2) “knowledge of social norms and conventions in a given communicative setting”, and (3) “the social structure of the speech community and the values and attitudes attached to language use, such as identifying ways of speaking that are appropriate to each type of people.”

In line with the scope of the present study, the assessment of language proficiency depends on the learners’ ability to use language, which is, in fact,

a part of their CC. As an implication for teaching English for international communication purposes, the results of such kind of research work contribute to the design of a course that targets the development of learners’ grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences in the target language to achieve their communicative purposes. Thus, the ESBP course needs to focus on honing learners’ linguistic resources to use communication strategies in order to be effective in performing communicative tasks (**Tarone & Yule, 1989**).

3.2. Communication Strategies

Non-native speakers often encounter problems to sustain a conversation in English. When they face certain difficulties to convey their ideas or thoughts, for instance they may ask for help, confirmation or clarification. The sources of these problems can be various. Some can be related to the interactants’ cultural differences, while others to linguistic difficulties. In this situation, language users tend to use communication devices to overcome these problems and keep communication open. These devices are known as communication strategies; *thereafter* CSs, which (**Cook, 1993, p. 119**) perceives as “a spare tyre for emergencies.” For (**Hedge, 2000, p. 52**), CSs are usually associated with spoken language and used when speakers cannot express their thoughts and messages because of their lack of resources in their second language (L2). For (Tarone & Yule, 1989, p. 10), speakers use CSs to solve problems encountered in the transmission of information. The authors then identify three categories: (1) avoiding, (2) paraphrasing, and (3) conscious-transfer or borrowing.

Avoidance strategies are used when the speaker either lacks the necessary vocabulary to refer to something (i.e. topic avoidance strategy), or starts to talk about an idea, but stops before reaching the communicative goal due to the inability to continue (i.e. message abandonment strategy). Speakers also use paraphrasing strategies either by employing an alternative term that is close in meaning to the target lexical item (i.e. approximation), or describing the properties of the target object or action, such as its

color, size, shape, or function (i.e. circumlocution). Conscious-transfer or borrowing strategies involve the transfer of items from L1 to the target language in order to communicate the intended meaning. This occurs in three ways: literal translation (i.e. the speaker uses an L1 item or structure and modifies it in accordance with the features of the target language), foreignizing (i.e. the speaker uses an L1 word by adjusting it to L2 phonologically, such as the addition of an L2 suffix), or by code-switching (i.e. the speaker employs an L1 word with L2 pronunciation).

In the literature, many studies, e.g. (Corder, 1978) and (Boxer & Cohen, 2004), examined and approved the effect of proficiency level on the speaker's use and choice of CSs. Additionally, they found that CSs are more often used by learners with low language proficiency than those with high language proficiency (Boxer & Cohen, 2004). However, other research works (Ting & Phan, 2008) concluded that speakers with low proficiency tend to rely on L1-based strategies, or avoidance strategies to overcome communication difficulties, and yet their proficiency level did not influence the number of CSs employed (Ting & Phan, 2008).

Thus, CSs require a certain competence that is known as the ability to use linguistic knowledge efficiently (Kasper, 1997, p. 345). Working learners' strategic competence is important as it compensates for oral communication failures. (Pawlak, 2015, p. 120) emphasizes the importance of CSs to compensate for the gaps in the knowledge of the target situation system for both beginners and advanced learners because difficulties in communication happen to occur at all levels of proficiency. This means that an individual's language proficiency level may influence the choice of communication strategy thereby affecting his strategic competence.

As part of ESP studies and implications for teaching and learning English for specific business communication purposes, a needs analysis study is necessary to investigate the workplace requirements as regards the use of English. Furthermore, the language proficiency and communication abilities are worth to examine in order to identify the subjects' language needs.

4. Results and Discussion

Significantly, the present study attempted to depict the language needs of job-experienced learners as regards the use of English in business communication with foreign partners. The research targeted the engineering directorate due to the ease to data access and informants. As a research method, the sample population was provided with a questionnaire to collect data on the company, informants, their actual use of English at the workplace, and their English learning experience. These data made it possible to have a clear picture of the engineers' target profile and the profile of their personal ability as language users in performing their business activities.

The Engineering directorate, *hereafter*, ENG, of the Algerian oil and gas company (SONATRACH) is situated in Arzew, Oran western region of Algeria. It is the accompanying structure of SONATRACH projects responsible for the detailed elaboration of the engineering studies taking charge of all the development and investment plans of the oil and gas company from the maturation and conception phase until the on-plant realization phase. This is an adequate environment to explore the use of English in a corporate setting where it is indispensable for communicating with stakeholders in order to discuss project issues. The investigation revealed that the technical offers are received in English and thus the analysis, technical comments, and invitation of the tenderers to meetings to obtain further clarification are conducted in the same language.

As aforementioned, the sample population includes engineers coming from different professional technical backgrounds (instrumentation, mechanics, HSE, and hydrocarbon exploitation) who collaborate with teams from different nationalities, both native and non-native, either for the transfer of technical knowledge and abilities for developing engineering studies or collaborating for the realization of SONATRACH projects. The English language occupies, then, a privileged position since the success of the company does not depend only on their professional competence but on their language ability as well. It is for this very reason that the company is

regularly organizing English courses for the engineers be they GE or BE courses.

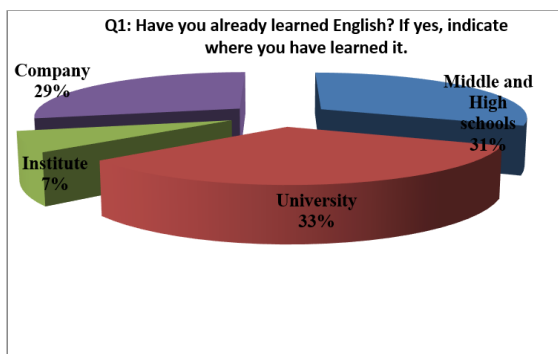
The investigation involved 30 subjects who answered a questionnaire written in both French and English to offer them the choice to respond in a language they command well. However, they selected the French version as it is the first foreign language they learned at school, and the one they feel more or less comfortable when used because it is the academic language used in tertiary education as far as engineers are concerned. The 30 subjects included twenty-one men (70%) and nine women (30%) with a professional experience varying from 10 to 30 years.

To obtain precise and credible answers permitting an easy quantification and analysis, fifteen variable questions were written and organized into two parts. The first part examines the engineers' English language learning experience, whilst, the second one serves the target situation profile. After gathering the responses of the thirty engineers, the answers were interpreted and analyzed.

4.1 English Language-Learning Experience

As English is the second foreign language in Algeria, it is taught at all the educational cycles (middle, high and tertiary). Moreover, it is one of the working languages and is among the conditions when the company hires engineers.

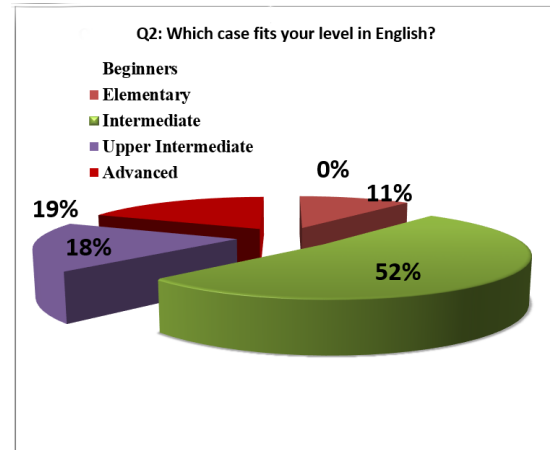
Figure 1



The rate of informants' GE learning experience

When questioned on their GE learning experience, the 30 subjects responded they learned it during their educational cycles both secondary and tertiary, and even at the company level as demonstrated in **Figure 1**.

Figure 2

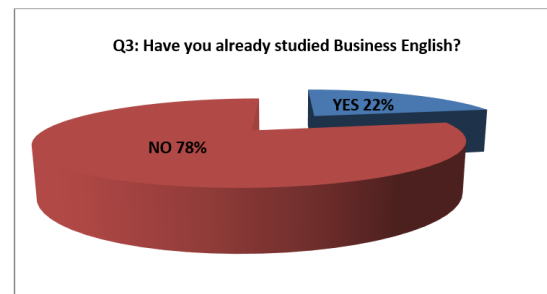


The informants' varying GE proficiency levels

In detail, the 30 informants possess a GE proficiency level, varying from elementary to advanced as indicated by their responses interpreted in Figure 2. This is, in fact, required to get versed in BE courses provided to the different levels once getting through the GE phase based on the hierarchy decision.

Research revealed that the English courses, either GE or BE, afforded at the expense of the company were with the collaboration of private language schools or the SONATRACH training center, namely the CPE (Centre de Perfectionnement en Entreprise). These courses were organized for all levels (i.e. Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced) with participants grouped according to the placement test results.

Figure 3



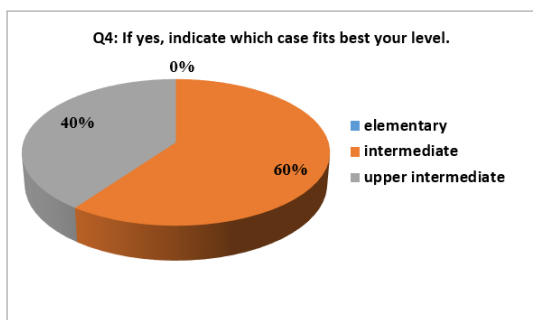
The rate of engineers who attended a BE course

Regarding the informants' BE learning experience, the findings (see Figure 3) demonstrated that only five participants attended a BE course organized by the company. These results support the need of its organization for the rest of the engineers. The investigation revealed that these courses were at the

company premises using the services of the private language school, ALC or the CPE. It should be noted that the teachers hired do not have a BE training but come from a GE language background.

The investigation revealed that the textbooks selected for GE and BE courses were respectively, ‘Interchange (intro, elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate and upper-intermediate)’ and ‘Market Leader’ (elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate and upper-intermediate), for a four-hour-a-week course with a length for each full level varying between 70 to 120 hours. These selected materials could have been very profitable allowing students to improve their English proficiency, however, the investigation revealed three shortcomings: 1) students’ irregular attendance (the learners used to leave the classroom at any time), 2) the course-time planning was not suitable, and 3) the topics were authentic but did not correspond to their professional situations.

Figure 4



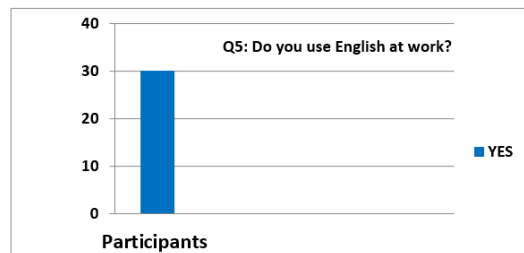
The rate of language proficiency levels in BE

As indicated in Figure 4, among the five informants who received courses in BE, three have an intermediate level, and two have an upper-intermediate one. It is bought to notice that Market Leader programs target the development of learners’ language ability in general BE.

4.2 Target Profile Assessment

As ENG engineers need to develop the ability to use BE to conduct international communication activities given their different work tasks, it is important to identify their communication difficulties by collecting the necessary data on their target profile.

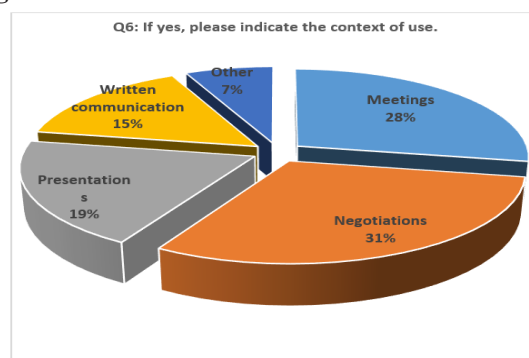
Figure 5



The rate of English use at work

As shown in **Figure 5**, the rate confirms that the engineers’ job profile requires the use of English. However, it is worthy to discover its context of use.

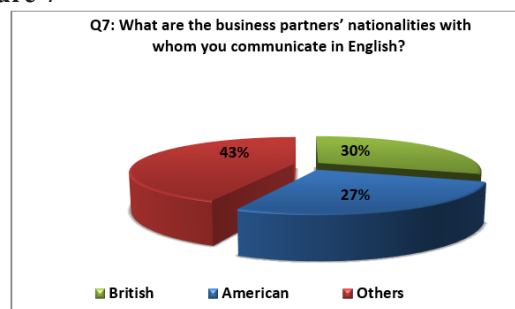
Figure 6



The rate of the required business communication skills

Figure 6 provides further details on the business communication skills required in the ENG context. The results indicate that the informants use English in both speaking and writing. The business speaking skills occupy mostly the same rate, however, writing occupies a rate of 15%, and the least percentage represents those activities, such as the realization of specifications, documentation, and calculations as mentioned by the informants. This explains that not all ENG engineers occupy the same hierarchy, which justifies the varying rates.

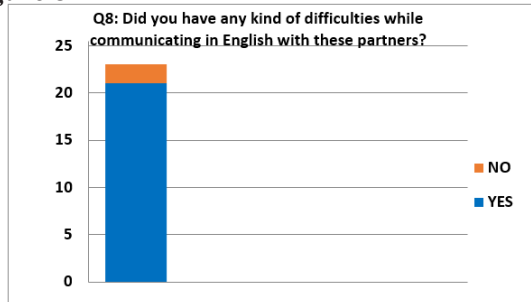
Figure 7



ENG business partners

As regards the different nationalities of the company’s business joints, **Figure 7** shows a slight difference between non-native speakers with 43%, and native ones, 57%. This indicates that the informants need to develop cross-cultural communicative competence to get adapted to different nationalities. This is a case of different “Englishes” and different cultures.

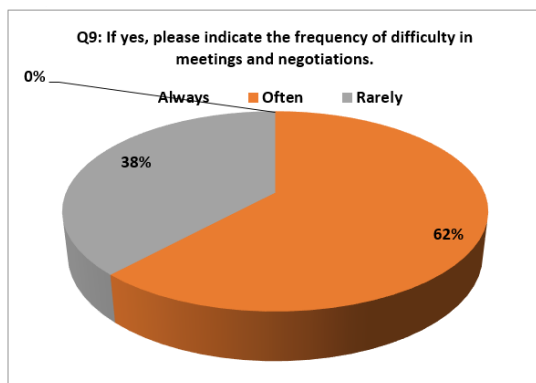
Figure 8



The rate of communication difficulties

The eighth question was addressed to those informants, 23, using English in meetings and negotiations, the bar-graph in **Figure 8**, showing a majority of 21 that responded positively. This in fact justifies the necessity to get trained in the field so as to develop specific communication skills. The two informants who responded negatively might have attended the BE course. However, it is important to know what skills pause the most difficulties to our 21 informants.

Figure 9

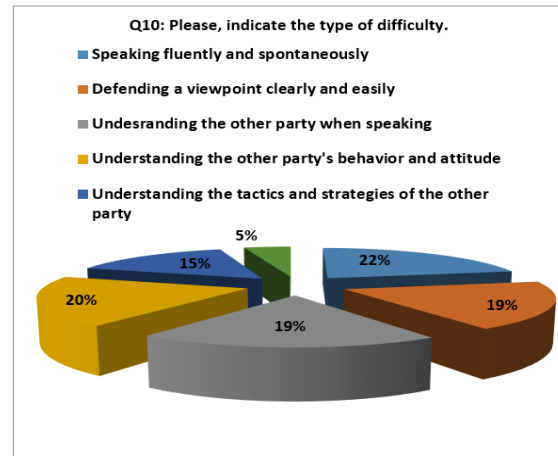


The frequency of difficulty with the use of English in meetings and negotiations

As regards the communication difficulties encountered with SONATRACH partners, **Figure 9** demonstrates 13 subjects who are unable to use English effectively in meetings and negotiations. This informs about the necessity to be trained in the field for developing business communication skills. The rest of subjects

might be related to the fact that certain engineers attended the BE course organized by the ENG department with others who have between upper intermediate and advanced in GE, yet, according to their answers, they still need some reinforced training in the language of meetings and negotiations.

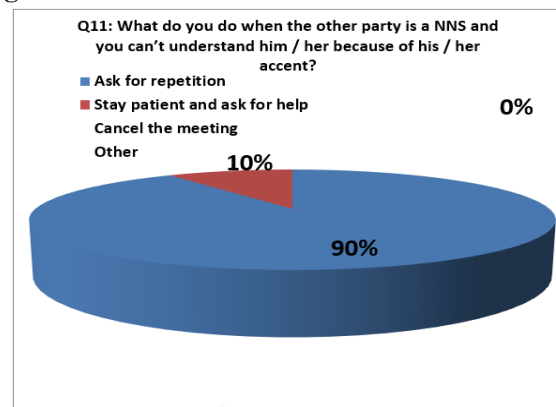
Figure 10



The participants’ types of communication difficulties

To obtain details on the type of language problems the 21 informants confront, the results displayed approximately similar rates. 19 % to 20%, in the different four cases of difficulties, which in one way or another hinder the success of communication in terms of language use as demonstrated in **Figure 10**. However, the rate of difficulty happens to vary with partners, and this leads to noticing the intricacy of the situation and the efforts the engineers need to deploy to get adapted to the different English accents. Thus, listening activities to authentic material becomes very important.

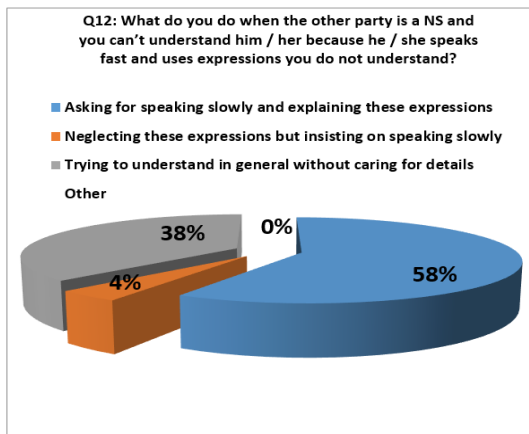
Figure 11



The rate of communication problems with non-native English partners

Among the 21 subjects confronting communication problems, **Figure 11** shows that 19 rather prefer to ask the other party for repetition. However, only two, that is, 10% prefer to stay patient and ask for their colleagues help. No one would venture cancelling the meeting as it might have a very bad impact on the company.

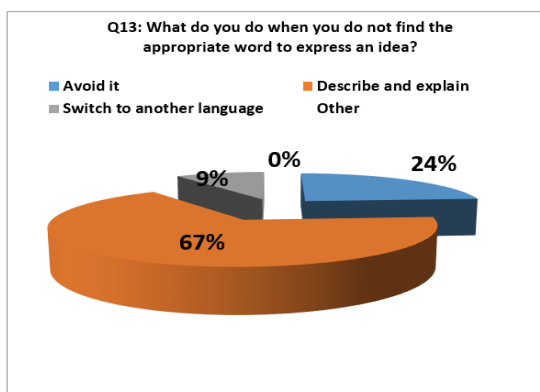
Figure 12



The rate of communication problems with native English partners

Figure 12 shows that the majority of informants ask the other party to speak slowly and explain the expressions while 38% try to understand in general without caring for details. This justifies why there is some surprise when signing the contract. Very few opt for the third case, 4%, which shows that they display rather some perception problems. No other strategy is used to better understand their foreign counterparts.

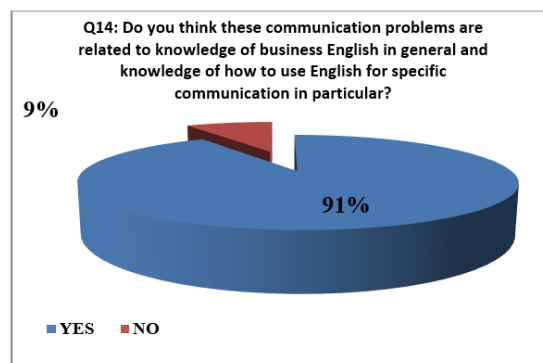
Figure 13



The participants' choice of communication strategies
 Questioned on the use of CSs when they cannot understand the non-native counterpart given a list of four alternatives, a way to examine the 21 informants' strategic competence to clarify misunderstanding. The

answers, as **Figure 13** displays, revealed that their majority (14) prefers to use some kind of achievement strategies (e.g., paraphrase, approximation, and circumlocution), against a minority (5), who opts for the use of avoidance strategy in order preserve the meeting time. Two participants prefer code switching by moving spontaneously to French, which may cause serious problems when the other does not understand this language. This shows that the informants confront language proficiency problems, and thus need much training in this context.

Figure 14



The participants' attitude to justify their communication problems

The answers to question 14 demonstrated that 21 participants believe that learning BE for specific communication purposes would help them overcome the problems of communication they confront in meetings and negotiations as shown in Figure 14. Only two participants believe they are not necessarily related to knowledge of BE but rather to experience.

Figure 15



The rate of language abilities the engineers want to develop

Evaluating the 21 engineers' viewpoints on the ESBP course and the abilities they would like to develop, the participants favored a course that would help them overcome their communication problems and develop some self-reliance. Presenting them with a list of alternatives to see what to focus on and what hierarchy to follow on the basis of the obtained answers. The results displayed in **Figure 15** explain the engineers' need to improve linguistic, communication and intercultural competences on approximately equal footing.

So to speak, the answers enabled us to assess the profile of the real activities that the engineers have to perform besides their proficiency in performing them. The findings revealed that the engineers use English in both oral and written communication; however, 21 confront difficulties to communicate with their counterparts in meetings and negotiations supported by their use of CSs. It is important to note that successful meetings and negotiations require English users of high proficiency level. These engineers did not attend a BE course, which approved our assumptions that they do not have the required language proficiency for specific business communication purposes, which explains the communication problems they encounter with foreign partners. Because their majority (78%) did not study BE except those, 22%, who had a BE course organized by the company, the results support the need of a BE course to be organized for the ENG engineers with an emphasis on developing both speaking and listening abilities to communicate effectively in meetings and negotiations.

5. Conclusion

As our global world is communication-oriented, any type of workplace considers communication skills to be of utmost importance to lead to success. Encouraging economic exchange has resulted in the cost to conduct different business activities, of which the key to success requires from the multinational staff specific language use and mastery of business communication skills, which happens to occur using English.

For this very reason, it was worthwhile exploring the domains of language use and language skills through the analysis of 30 ENG engineers' target

and the present situation needs to shed light on their necessities, lacks, and wants as regards the use of English in relation to their occupational activities. The findings' analyses displayed the informants' lack of language proficiency level for specific business purposes explained in the difficulties encountered when engaged in business activities of meetings and negotiations through their misuse of communicative strategies as a personal technique to avoid any communication failure. Thus, the interpretation of the engineers' responses to the questionnaire revealed that 21 engineers need to develop business speaking and listening skills to be effective users of English for discussing and negotiating issues about SONATRACH projects (specifications, deadlines, planning) with foreign joints. This justifies the importance of a tailored BE course placing greater emphasis on the language of meetings and negotiations. We believe a BE syllabus tailored to meet the engineers needs will be of great significance to enable them achieve their communicative goals.

Conflict of Interest

I declare that I have no conflict of interest.

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How to cite this article

Houti Yamina (2024), Exploring the perceived needs of job-experienced users of English for international business communication The case of the ENG Directorate-SONATRACH, Academic review of social and human studies, vol 16, number 01, Hassiba Ben Bouali University of Chlef, Algeria, p. p: 212-224