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**Preparing Learners at the Age of Technology with New Competencies and Skills
in Teaching Foreign Languages**

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية - معهد الآداب واللغات

المركز الجامعي مغنيّة - الجزائر

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قواعد النّشر في المجلّة

تُرَجَّب مجلّة "إحالات" بنشر البحوث الأكاديمية الرّصينة في اللّغة والأدب والنّقد، باللّغة العربيّة والإنجليزيّة والفرنسيّة والإسبانيّة، مع الالتزام بقواعد النّشر الآتية:

1. ألا يكون البحث قد سبق نشره، أو قُدِّم للنشر في مجلّة أو أيّ شكل من أشكال النّشر الأخرى.
2. ألا يتجاوز عدد صفحات البحث 30 صفحة.
3. أن يُرفَق البحث المكتوب باللّغة العربيّة بملخّص في حدود (100) كلمة والكلمات المفاتيح في حدود (05) كلمات باللّغتين العربيّة والإنجليزيّة. وأن يُرفَق البحث المكتوب بإحدى اللّغات الأجنبيّة (الإنجليزيّة أو الفرنسيّة أو الإسبانيّة) بملخّص في حدود (100) كلمة والكلمات المفاتيح في حدود (05) كلمات باللّغة الإنجليزيّة.
4. أن يُكْتَب البحث باللّغة العربيّة بخطّ Sakkal Majalla قياس 16 في المتن و12 في الهامش، والبحث باللّغتين الإنجليزيّة والفرنسيّة بخطّ Times new roman قياس 12 في المتن و10 في الهامش.
5. أن تُفرد للأشكال والجداول والصّور والرّسومات صفحات خاصّة داخل البحث نفسه.
6. أن تُكْتَب الهوامش في آخر البحث آليًا.
7. أن يُراعى في كتابة الهوامش ترتيبُ البيانات، كما يلي: اسم المؤلّف ولقبه، وعنوان المؤلّف، ودار النّشر، ومكان النّشر، وعدد الطّبعة، وتاريخ صدور الطّبعة، ورقم الصّفحة.
8. أن يُخْتتم البحث بقائمة للمصادر والمراجع المعتمّدة.
9. أن يُراعى في كتابة قائمة المصادر والمراجع ترتيبُ البيانات، كما يلي: لقب المؤلّف واسمه، وعنوان المؤلّف، ودار النّشر، ومكان النّشر، وعدد الطّبعة، وتاريخ صدور الطّبعة.
10. أن يلتزم المؤلّف بإجراء التّعديلات التي يطلبها المراجعون في أجل أقصاه (15) يومًا.
11. أن يلتزم المؤلّف بإدراج المراجع في المنصّة الجزائرية للمجلّات العلميّة وإمضاء التّعهّد في أجل أقصاه (07) أيّام، وذلك بعد قبول المقال للنّشر.

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افتتاحية العدد

أثر فريق تحرير مجلة "إحالات" أفراد عدد خاص لأعمال الملتقى الوطني الأول الموسوم "Preparing Learners at the Age of Technology with New Competencies and Skills in Teaching Foreign Languages"، والذي أشرف على تنظيمه قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، بمعهد الآداب واللغات، بالمركز الجامعي مغنية، يومي 01 و02 ديسمبر 2021. وقد جاء تخصيص هذا العدد لأعمال الملتقى، الذي ترأسته الدكتورة حنان رباحي؛ عضو هيئة التدريس بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية وعضو فريق تحرير المجلة، تقديراً لجهود الباحثين الذين قدموا جملة من المداخلات المحكّمة والمُحكّمة حول إعداد المتعلّمين بكفاءات ومهارات جديدة لتدريس اللغات الأجنبية في عصر التكنولوجيا، وتثميناً لدراساتهم الرّصينة التي تستأهل النّشر بين دفتي مثل هذا المؤلّف الدّوري، ابتغاء إشاعة الفائدة العلميّة بين المشتغلين والمهتمين بتعليميّة اللّغات الأجنبية من جهة، وحتّى لا تنصرم رؤاهم المعرفيّة وخلصات أبحاثهم العلميّة بانصرام زمن المداخلة أو أجل الملتقى من جهة أخرى.

ويُجيدّ فريق تحرير مجلة "إحالات"، بهذه المناسبة، ترحيبه بنشر الأبحاث المقدّمة في الملتقيات العلميّة بشكل حضوريّ أو عن بعدٍ، في أعداد خاصّة، في صيغة ورقية، وأخرى إلكترونيّة على مستوى المنصّة الجزائريّة للمجلّات العلميّة التي تتيح لرؤساء التّحرير، بالتنسيق مع المحرّرين المساعدين، إمكانيّة إنشاء مثل هذه الأعداد الخاصّة المفردة لأعمال المؤتمرات والندوات والأيام الدّراسية العلميّة أو الاستكتابات الجماعيّة في موضوع بعينه. كما يتقدّم فريق تحرير المجلة بجزيل شكره وعظيم امتنانه للدكتورة حنان رباحي، لتحملها مشقّة مُراجعة المقالات من النّاحية الشّكلية مُراعاةً لقالب المجلة وقواعد النّشر فيها، وتجشّمها كبد مُتأبعة المراحل التي يمرّ بها تقديم المقال في المنصّة الجزائريّة للمجلّات العلميّة إلى غاية نشره، ويتمنّى لها التّوفيق والسّداد في مهامها البيداغوجيّة والعلميّة.

والله نسأل الإخلاص في النّية، والإخلاص في العمل. والله من وراء القصد.

رئيس التّحرير

ديباجة الملتقى

بقلم الدكتورة حنان رباحي

Presentation

Learning a second language has always been a passion of most learners around the world. The multi-faceted globalised movement acknowledges the need for new models and methods of learning to be added to worldwide education goals for the purpose of boosting the quality of learning. However, the question of how best to teach them and what skills to be taught is largely overlooked. Therefore, it has been argued that Rethinking Pedagogy is a crucial point to tackle the complex educational challenges and to provide learners with educational support. To develop higher order skills, today's learners must engage in real world experiences that have a value and relevance to their personalities and communities through collaboration, engagement in research and writing analysis, and the ability to communicate effectively and to solve learning problems. As a key step for educational transformation, Rethinking pedagogy needs to develop, and to specify, learners' competencies and skills.

Aims of the Conference

The First National Conference on Teaching Foreign Languages aims to bring together leading academic researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of Teaching Foreign Languages. It also provides a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners and educators to present and discuss the most recent innovations and trends about teaching, and to develop learners' competencies and skills of this century.

Subject Fields

Education, Language Contact, Linguistics, Literature, Psychology, Didactics, ICT.

Issues

The conference provides the opportunity to explore research in a variety of disciplines where the following trends and issues will be of particular interest but are not limited to:

1. Communication skills and collaboration.
2. Creativity and innovation.
3. Social and cross-cultural skills.
4. Ethical Considerations and Plagiarism in Academic Research
5. Academic writing and Assessments.

Call for Contributions

All honorable authors are kindly encouraged to contribute to, and help shape, the conference through submissions of their research abstracts, presentations and posters. Besides, high quality research contributions describing empirical, experimental, or theoretical work in all areas of teaching foreign languages are welcome.

All submitted conference abstracts will be blind peer-reviewed by competent reviewers (doctors and professors from different Algerian universities).

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A Reflection on Language Assessment in ESP : Instructors' and Learners' Perceptions in Focus / Asma ABBASSI

A Reflection on Language Assessment in ESP : Instructors' and Learners' Perceptions in Focus

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Abstract

Assessment is one of the most important variables that play a decisive role in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The present study was designed to investigate the quality of assessment methods within ESP instructors as well as the major challenges they face throughout their teaching process at the chemistry department, University of Tlemcen (Algeria). Results revealed that ESP instructors depend on traditional methods to a large extent. Besides, they encounter challenges as they need to improvise since they lack adequate training. Moreover, students seemed to have some difficulties in assessment tasks as they lacked the necessary skills to communicate in the language in context.

Keywords: Assessment, challenges, ESP, quality of teaching, perceptions.

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1. Introduction

Assessment is an integral part of any educational setting. Its value cannot be underestimated as it allows practitioners to obtain knowledge about learners' linguistic competence and professional knowledge which reflects the quality of the teaching/learning process. Richards and Renandiya (2002) maintain that assessment brings about a judgment about the successfulness of teaching throughout investigating the effectiveness of actual teaching about the syllabus in an attempt to refine the chasms in the process. More precisely, ESP assessment methods are founded in congruence with the course content and objectives. In effect, ESP teachers, who are generally English department graduates, are not domain-specialised as they lack the necessary training. Hereby, devising tests and evaluation tools is envisioned as a daunting task.

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2. Literature Review

2.1. Evaluation and Assessment in ESP

Assessment in ESP is concerned with evaluating language competencies within specific disciplines. That is to say, ESP assessment is not of big difference from general language assessment, except that it focuses on the language, skills, discourse of a specific discipline (Dudley Evans & St John 1998). Thus, assessing specific English use among identical groups of learners having special learning needs, such as doctors, engineers, lawyers, and others. Therefore, assessment in ESP is concerned with language acquaintance along with specific purpose content knowledge. In this specific context, Douglas (2000: 8) defines ESP assessment as "tests which attempt to measure language ability for specific vocational, professional and academic purposes".

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ESP assessment involves three main types: diagnostic, formative, and summative. Diagnostic assessment helps teachers determine learners' actual competencies and knowledge at the beginning of the ESP teaching and learning process. This encompasses pre-tests, self-assessment, discussion board responses, and interviews. Formative assessment, on the other hand, is a process of getting continuous feedback about the teaching/learning situation during the instructional process. This can be achieved throughout in-class activities, teachers' classroom observation, questions/answers sessions as well as homework. Furthermore, summative assessment, which is the formal evaluation procedure, is carried out at the end of a unit of study to confirm that the teaching objectives had been met.

2.2. Assessment Methods in ESP

It is a truism to assert that assessment enhances the progression of education and plays a crucial role in promoting the chances of attaining the learning objectives. Hence, providing a rigorous, valid and reliable assessment procedure is likely to raise the quality of instruction. Assessment in ESP is related to particular content, theme, and topics of a specific area. Hence, alternative assessment methods have come into play to substitute traditional assessment. Alternative assessment methods are being implemented as an attempt to accentuate the role of learner-oriented assessment; further, it has shifted the focus towards a holistic assessment which is likely to deliver in-depth feedback about learner performance.

In traditional assessment, students are, mostly, exposed to a sort of questions with a given set of responses from which they chose an answer, such as true/false quiz or multiple-choice tests as well as fill in the blank activities. Hence, students tend to opt for one particular answer which is the most appropriate to the given question (Stoica, 2006). However, alternative assessment, including peer and self-assessment, teacher observation as well as portfolios, involves any type of testing where students produce answers to the questions based on their reasoning using their own words, such as short answers and paragraph or essay writing. Seemingly, these kinds of testing serve to "ask students to show what they can do" (Coombe et al., 2007). That is to say, students are required to expose their abilities and foster their creativity and critical thinking when producing answers, as they are having opportunities to reconsider their understanding, build prior knowledge, integrate ideas, explain and communicate their knowledge as well (Roscoe & Chi, 2007).

Thereupon, the most appropriate assessment methods of ESP, as it concerns special needs and vocabulary, are objective tests, short answers, essay writing, oral assessment, and teachers' observation. Objective tests are test types in which the marking of the answer is objective (Stoica,

2006). This category encompasses short-answer questions and multiple-choice tests. Undoubtedly, these test formats are known for their practicality, high reliability and rapidity of scoring, the economy of time, and the ability to test large content areas. Short-answer questions, on the other hand, provide learners the chance to generate answers instead of choosing from a limited set of suggestions. Besides, the most appropriate way to check out students' language abilities and the extent to which they are qualified is to produce a composition that transmits their ideas and knowledge; yet, essay writing is considered as a time-consuming activity that is deficient in the communicative needs that ESP learners require. Another method is oral assessment; this type involves all tasks that trigger students to expose their oral or communicative skills about their subject area such as role-plays, oral reports, retelling stories, interviews ...etc. At last, teacher observation in classrooms is also visualized as an effective method to assess learners' skills and performance.

2.3- Issues Related to ESP Assessment Quality

It is a truism to assert that the major obstacle that ESP practitioners encounter when producing course design or assessment activities is the lack of knowledge about the specialized subject. Consequently, they generally seek help from expert informants or make personal research to find out solutions. Otherwise, they opt for context-based research by analyzing language use in a specific subject area.

It should be noted, however, that four quality-aligned criteria should be considered to assure the effectiveness and good quality of the assessment procedure. Accordingly, classroom assessment needs to contain at least validity and reliability, which are vital in measuring the quality of information obtained in the classroom (Genesee & Upsher, 1996), and fairness which is of paramount importance in the preparation of the assessment.

- **Validity**

An assessment process is said to be valid when it is successful in measuring what it is supposed to measure (Maree, 2010). To put it simply, validity implies the extent to which the obtained information throughout the assessment allows the teacher to get clear and authentic facts about the learning situation that he/she wishes to investigate. This criterion entails four aspects of validity. First, content validity refers to the extent to which the objectives of assessment correspond with the instructional objectives. Second, consequential validity refers to how assessment is of value to the teaching and learning process and the students *per se* (O'Malley & Piers, 1996).

Third, ipsative validity (Hamidi, 2010); in this type learners assess themselves by comparing their actual performance with their previous level (Gipps, 1994). This type is also called “learner referenced validity” which is considered by Lambert and Lines (2000) of significant role as it serves to identify the learners’ progress, and offers diagnostic information about them in the assessment procedure.

- **Reliability**

Reliability is assessment construction that denotes the extent to which the assessment brings about consistent results. Assessment is said to be reliable if there is a similarity in scores or judges’ ratings when it is done on different occasions with different learners’ and instructors (Brindley, 2003). In this respect, Harmer (2001: 322) posits “*in practice, reliability is enhanced by making the test instructors absolutely clear, restricting the scope for variety in the answers, and making sure that test conditions remain constant*”. Some scholars call this type *dependability* claiming that assessment is dependable when it involves disclosure and fidelity. The former implies the extent to which the student gets a question right or wrong depending on the nature of the question, whilst the latter denotes the way the evidence is or is not recorded (Lambert & Lines, 2000: 11). The factors that influence assessment quality about reliability according to Brown (2004) are the diversity of scoring by assessors, the instruments of data collection, and the variation in the learner. Accordingly, Brindley (2003) assumes that providing good training and expertise for instructors would yield to improve their abilities to obtain the desired information. Furthermore, accounting for a variety of assessment methods would lead to avoiding bias and inaccuracy of using one method, in addition to the use of formative assessment (Hamidi, 2010).

- **Fairness**

Fairness is regarded as the most controversial category in large-scale assessment (Kunnan, 2005). Practically, fairness implies dealing with learners as if they all have the same abilities and providing them with a similar opportunity to expose their competencies (Lynch, 2001). He added that “fairness will need to address the consequences of assessment; that is, we need to examine the uses to which our assessment procedures are being put and the intended as well as unintended effects on the individual being assessed” (Lynch, 2001: 232). Hence, students should be given fair opportunities when taking part in the assessment, so that they all have equal chances to demonstrate their knowledge (Messik, 1994). On his part, Brown (2005) assumes that fairness applies to

teachers' objectivity and lack of bias or any personal feelings towards students when assessing or scoring.

3- Methodology

The present study was designed to investigate the quality of assessment methods used by ESP practitioners as well as the challenges they face when assessing language ability in context. Accordingly, the sample population of the study encompasses ESP teachers and students at the University of Tlemcen (Algeria). The objectives of the research were:

1. To investigate the assessment methods used by teachers in ESP contexts.
2. To determine the challenges faced by ESP teachers in ESP classrooms.

To examine the extent to which these methods are effective from learners' perspectives.

3.1- Participants

Participants were 6 ESP teachers at the Chemistry department, whose age ranged around 26 to 35 years old, in addition to 54 randomly selected students of different levels enrolled at the same department. It is a truism to assert that the present sample cannot be representative of all ESP contexts. Yet, results might be viable in similar settings

3.2- Instruments

An in-depth structured interview was conducted with ESP teachers in an attempt to obtain information about the quality of their assessment methods and practices. Besides, classroom observations were employed to draw authentic feedback about teachers' assessment methods, and whether these latter are effective and congruent with learners' needs. To check the matter from both sides, questionnaires were carried out with students to depict their perceptions about teachers.

4- Results and Discussion

What is, probably, prevalent about assessment and testing in language for specific purposes is that it is similar to that of general language assessment. However, Douglas (2000) claims that ESP assessment covers special assessment methods and techniques for the specific-subject area in concern. Considering this research, results demonstrated variations in the methods teachers use in assessment. They also reflect a comprehensive image of the impediments and facilities they face in the ESP teaching setting.

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• ESP Teachers' Challenges

The major issue that was uncovered throughout the present research is that the ESP teaching situation undergoes considerable issues concerned with the assessment methods in addition to some teaching practices which are, mainly, the consequences of a lack of teacher preparation and training programmes. This is evident from the fact that ESP teachers are, mostly, graduates of general English departments, which implies that they are prepared to teach general English. Yet, when launching into ESP teaching, they face the challenge of teaching English alongside the field-specific content. Moreover, the majority of them were part-time teachers holding Master's degrees in the English language, who had not attended any training, except for the only full-time teacher who had received pre-service and in-service training for one year. The following table illustrates ESP teachers' profiles:

Initials	Gender	Qualification	Training	Status	Experience
SK	Female	Doctorate	Yes	Full-time	5 years
BA	Female	Master	No	Part-time	3 years
SG	Male	Master	No	Part-time	1 year
CW	Female	Master	No	Part-time	2 years
TH	Female	Master	No	Part-time	2 years
SS	Female	Master	No	Part-time	1 year

Table 1: ESP teachers' profile

Furthermore, to be able to manage ESP assessment, ESP teachers need to take into account the use of language in context. This implies being familiar with specific vocabulary, etymology, scientific concepts as well as developing an understanding of the content related to the field to be able to teach and assess the language through knowledge. Furthermore, introducing both language ability and knowledge of the subject matter are considered requisite elements in the formulation of test tasks, as this may trigger students to live the target language use situation. This is confirmed by Bachman (1990:112) who asserts that *“one would expect that the closer the correspondence between the characteristics of the test method and the essential features of the language use context, the more “authentic” the test task will be for test-takers”*. To this end, creativity must be present.

What was noticed throughout this investigation is that the academic staff at the Chemistry department are working diligently to improve the teaching situation in general, ESP context is no

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exception. As a case in point, they have provided a “Google Drive” system to facilitate the process of formative assessment for teachers. That is to say, they are required to establish at least one test per month in addition to the continuous evaluation of students' participation and integration in classroom tasks. This initiative has been carried out to improve the ESP quality of teaching and foster students' learning. Interestingly, class size was another helping factor for teachers to manage successfully their classes as the maximum number of students didn't exceed 26 students. Undoubtedly, this is the potential to facilitate the teaching process as a whole as well as classroom activities including assessment and testing. Therefore, it's most likely that ESP teachers are exposed to better conditions that are likely to help them build positive attitudes and improve the situation; hence, they would be able to better control the assessment procedures.

- **Classroom Assessment Methods**

Based on the analysis of the data, it was revealed that teachers tend to use a variety of assessment methods. They, mostly, provide tasks that are related to the specific purpose language content. Thus, ESP teachers who are in charge of the first and second year (L1 and L2) use traditional assessment methods such as fill-in-the-blank tasks, multiple-choice activities, and true/false statements. Noting that these activities are adopted in both formative and summative assessment. As for third-year(L3) and master students, they are assessed based on paragraph or essay writing along with oral presentations to assess their oral abilities. The following figure illustrates the findings.

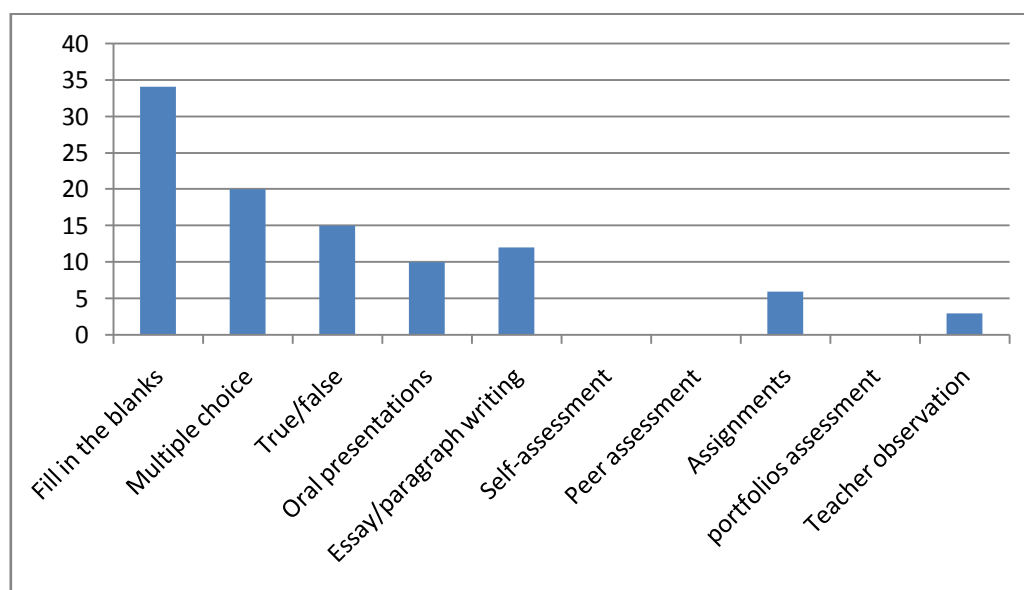


Figure 1: The major assessment methods used by ESP teachers.

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Admittedly, alternative assessment models such as self/peer assessment, portfolios, and observation are said to enhance learner autonomy. In effect, ESP students showed a tendency towards collaborative tasks in general, and peer assessment in particular, as this method is believed to be a factor that triggers their motivation and helps them improve their language skills and content knowledge as claimed by Syzenko (2018). Alas, this kind of assessment was completely ignored by teachers seeing that they depend solely on traditional methods as the previous paragraph demonstrates. This may be due to the insufficiency of teachers' qualifications in terms of professionalism and creativity. Moreover, it was noticed that there was a lack, if not a complete absence, of technology integration; teachers barely use computers, data shows, or any other ICT tools.

Owing to the fact that there was no unified syllabus, teachers of each level met to discuss students' needs and set the content of the course. Experienced teachers were successful to establish adequate courses taking into account the main objective of ESP, which is teaching English language ability through specific content knowledge. Nevertheless, novice teachers steered towards concentrating solely on general English grammar and vocabulary. In this specific context, it's worth noting that training and formal preparation were important factors that would remedy their deficiencies and help them ameliorate their performance.

From their part, students expressed varied opinions towards the assessment used by their teachers. As shown in the following paragraphs, they believed that fill in the blanks, multiple-choice, and true/false activities are beneficial to them claiming that they help them enrich their vocabulary mainly, their scientific repertoire. Furthermore, they find these activities easy and convenient as they are already accustomed to this kind of task in the classroom.

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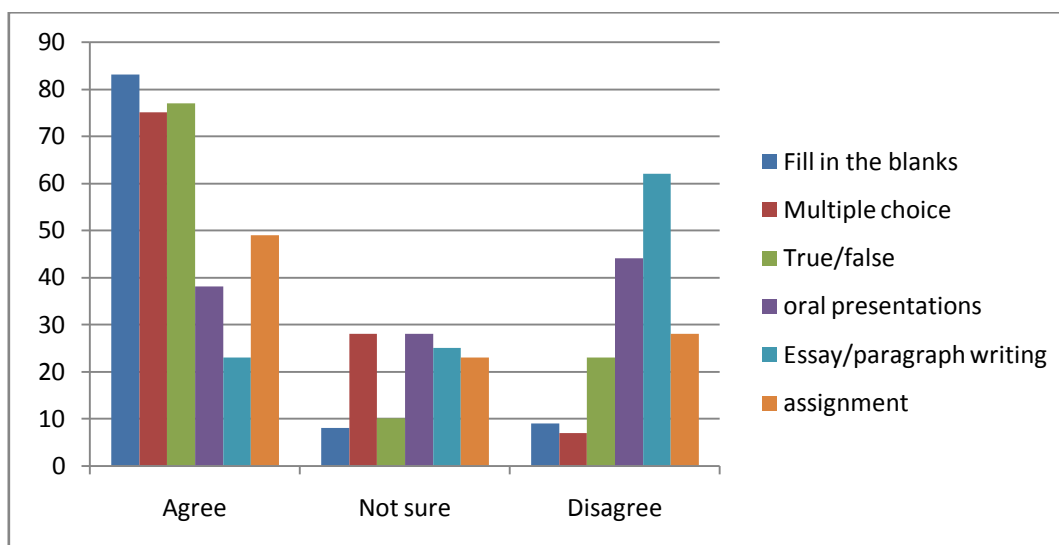


Figure2: students' perception about the effectiveness of assessment methods.

Paradoxically, writing activities and oral presentations seem to be the most difficult tasks. 63% of participants perceived writing tasks, particularly essays, as difficult and ineffective, considering that their grammar and vocabulary are insufficient to write whole essays. Likewise, they didn't advocate oral presentations as they lack speaking skills; noting that this skill is not given much care by teachers in ESP classes.

5 - Conclusion

In overall terms, the results of this study revealed that there is a variation in the assessment methods followed in ESP contexts about the objective of obtaining feedback about the learner's specific purpose language ability. It is firmly acknowledged that good training is deemed to create well-prepared instructors. Nevertheless, English teachers seem to be lacking adequate preparation before launching into the profession of subject-specific language teaching (ESP). This yields a serious impact on the teaching and learning process, not least assessment procedures. Accordingly, the adopted assessment methods have a significant role in determining learners' competencies, strengths, and weaknesses. In this respect, the incorporation of adequate assessment, being creative by implementing alternative methods and technology to ESP contexts would lead to better results.

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