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**Workplace English for Professionals:
Identifying Core Skills and Training Priorities**

اللغة الانجليزية لأهداف مهنية:
تحديد المهارات الأساسية وتحليل أولويات التدريب

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Abstract:

The present study is an attempt to shed light on the effectiveness of integrating English for Specific Purposes (henceforth ESP) in the training offered by Dr. Moualy Tahar university in Saida to technicians from different companies for the sake of promotion in their posts. Thus, a case study is adopted as a research method comprising both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Accordingly, two data collection instruments have been used; a questionnaire that was addressed to 12 technicians in addition to a semi structured interview that was conducted with the English trainer. The results revealed that though the target respondents are offered a workplace training for their professional benefits comprising English as a training subject matter, the lack of an appropriate English program lies as an obstacle against their needs, motivation and interest.

Keywords: technicians; workplace training; English for Specific Purposes; needs, interest

المخلص:

يهدف هذا المقال إلى تسليط الضوء على مدى فاعلية إدراج اللغة الانجليزية كلغة تخصص في التكوين الذي تقدمه جامعة د مولاي الطاهر بسعيدة لتقنيين من مختلف الشركات و الذي يهدف اساسا الى الترقية في منصب العمل. لذلك فقد تم اختيار دراسة حالة كطريقة للبحث مع استخدام المنهج النوعي و الكمي في جمع البيانات. أما من بين أدوات جمع البيانات فقد تم اختيار استبيان موجه إلى 12 تقني إضافة إلى مقابلة شخصية مع الاستاذ المكون و المختص في اللغة الانجليزية. و قد كشفت النتائج المتحصل عليها انه رغم أن العينة المستهدفة في هذه الدراسة تجرى تكوينا من اجل تحسين مستواهم المهني إلا أن عدم ملائمة برنامج يتماشى مع متطلبات و احتياجات العمال المتكونين يبقى عائقا أمام تلبية تطلعاتهم و احتياجاتهم كمهنيين متكونين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الانجليزية كلغة تخصص ، تكوين ، تطلعات ، التقنيين، احتياجات.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to shed light on whether integrating English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in training technicians as human resources copes with their requirements or not. In fact, the technicians who work in the technical body of different companies, undergo training in which English is integrated as a subject matter yet, the lack of an appropriate program lies as an obstacle against their motivation, interests and wants which has resulted in their weakness to improve their English competencies. Therefore, an attempt to suggest a suitable English training program may help those participants improve their professional English skills and then be

satisfied with what they acquire during their English training. As far as the research tools are concerned, a questionnaire was addressed to the target sampling i.e. technicians who are working in the technical service of different organizations in addition to a semi-structured interview that was conducted with the English trainer who is supposed to teach them ESP as they were the most appropriate tools for collecting the needed data.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Actually, it is widely known that technology has dominated all fields everywhere in the world and as it is agreed on that English is the language of technology hence, many countries have

changed their policy mainly those countries which were dominated by French language. They have changed their path towards integrating English starting from education in public sector to train employees from different companies in the economic sector such as Algeria Telecom, banks, Sonatrach...etc.

Indeed, the technicians who are working in the technical service in different companies found themselves facing a problem with the new language they need at the workplace since they have worked for years using French. For that reason, the call to undergo an in-service training in which English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is integrated as language of training has been a necessity so as technicians may overcome their difficulties to improve the needed English skills and competencies that are required at their workplace.

Consequently, technicians have been given an opportunity to undergo an in-service training at Dr. Moulay Tahar university in order to improve the language skills they need at their workplace. Yet, because of the lack of an appropriate program, technicians have become just receivers of information although they have demonstrated a great interest to learn English which may be a factor of dislike and reluctance.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Indeed, this research main objective is to highlight a neglected setting which is the economic sector because most of the ESP researches have been limited in the teaching/learning context more particularly in the higher educational settings. Thus, it seems an opportunity to pave the way for further works to invade the world of training at the workplace in Algeria. Moreover, in the current case study the work aims to identify technician's needs concerning the English language in order to suggest an appropriate program for their in-service training. For this sake, two research questions have been stated:

♦ How does integrating English in training technicians motivate them?

♦ How can a suitable English program affect technicians' needs wants and interest?

In accordance with the research questions; the following hypotheses have been suggested

♦ Technicians work is mainly related to technological devices. Therefore, they are aware that learning English during their in-service training is very important and this would increase their motivation.

♦ As long as the technicians are involved in the selection of an appropriate English program through a needs analysis, the training will suit their needs, wants and interest.

4. ESP INTERPRETATION

English for Specific Purposes or in short ESP is a new discipline within ELT. It is meant with teaching/learning English for specific needs of different learners in different disciplines. Therefore, ESP is a Learner-Centred Approach adopted in teaching English whose methodology is based on the specific needs of the learner. In this vein, Macky and Mountford (1978) state that ESP is "*generally used to refer to the teaching of English for a clearly utilitarian purpose*". On his side, Harmer (1983) defines ESP as "*...situations where the student has some specific reasons to learn a language*". From another perspective, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) state that "*both ESP learning situation and the target situation will influence the nature of the syllabus, materials, methodology and evaluation procedures.*"

4.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In fact, there are three common reasons to the emergence of ESP (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987); the demand of a new world, revolution in linguistics and focus on the learner. These factors paved the way to the emergence of teaching ESP in the early sixties. The demand of "a brave new world" was due to the expansion of science, technology and economic progress in addition to the economic power of the United States in the post world war have resulted in the dominance of English on the international scale.

Moreover, English teaching moved out of the educational establishment to the demand to fulfill the needs of new generation of learners who knew why they needed to study English and the major reason was business.

Furthermore, revolution in Linguistics occurred because of the radical change that appeared in the linguistic researches; while their previous researches were based on describing the features of the language, instead they began to focus on the way in which language is used in real communication for instance, in the late 1960s and the beginning of 1970s, there were many attempts to describe English for Science and technology (EST). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) state that one of the discoveries was that spoken and written English vary that is to mean given the particular context in which English is used, the variant of English will change which resulted in the variation of the language according to the different situations then it was the language instructions which meet the needs of the learner in specific context that shaped the language in use.

Besides, a focus on the learner's learning was given importance because the learners were seen to use different learning strategies, employ different skills and be motivated by different needs and interests so; more importance was given to the ways in which learners acquired language. 2.3. Characteristics of ESP

Being influenced by Strevens (1988), Dudley-Evans (1997) has divided English for Specific Purposes into absolute and variable characteristics.

● **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 in grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre.

● **Variable characteristics**

1-ESP may be related to or designed

for specific disciplines.

2-ESP may be used 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.

4-ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced learners.

5-Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems.

5. TRAINING EMPLOYEES

5.1. TRAINING AT THE WORKPLACE

The term, employees, is synonymous with Human Resources. Nevertheless, the word employees is frequent and more used though Human Resources is more practical and formal in any work place all over the world. Indeed, the success or failure of any company or organization is depending on the quality of its Human Resources. In other words, the essential element for developing any company is the role of the people in the organization. In this vein, Price states:

All the decisions, strategies, factors, principles, operations, practices, functions activities and methods related to the management of people as employees in any type of organization; all the dimensions related to people in their employment relationships; and all the dynamics that flow from it: all aimed at adding value to the delivery of goods and services; as well as the quality of work life for employees and hence helping to ensure continuous organizational success in transformative environment

Price (2007)

Price has stated the most important criteria related to the management of employees at any work place and that ensure employees satisfaction on one hand and organizational success on the other hand.

Indeed, training employees at the workplace is an important factor that influences employees' skills, abilities and attitudes. It also helps up-date their professional performance with the advance of technology and enables them to manage

the functions of the newly technical equipment.

Armstrong confirms that *“Performance is the matter of what people achieve and how they achieve it. Performance is, thus, the affective use of the required knowledge, skills and competences”* (Armstrong, 2006). In other words, having high potential employees does not mean that they will succeed. Yet, they must know what they have to do and how to do it. That is why training experts often use the phrase “workplace learning and performance”.

5.2. BENEFITS OF THE TRAINING

Training in the workplace has a central meaning in the discussion of the role of Human Resources in any organization. Training is the key reason for success because there is a continuous change in the strategies of the management of any company hence, they must go hand in hand with these changes. Technicians working in different companies have a direct connection to the company's quality of service and to the Company's technological investment. For that reason, employers should adapt training programs for the benefits of their employees as well as for the organization in order to:

- √ Increase confidence and motivation.
- √ Decrease risks because well trained employees can use the material and equipment without waste.
- √ Bring a sense of security and therefore reduce labor turnover and absenteeism.
- √ Involve the employees in the change process and provide them with the skills needed in order to adjust with the new situations.
- √ Enhance their responsibility and therefore increase pay and promotion
- √ Improve the availability and quality of the staff.

5.3. ENGLISH TRAINING PROGRAM

During the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, training employees focused on the writing side only. Then focus shifted to “spoken interaction” including spoken interaction

and oral presentation and this gave the four skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) full attention. Later on training has covered “business communication skills” including socializing, telephoning, meetings, oral presentations and negotiation. Hence, work place training evolution kept up with advanced communication technologies such as “telecommunication, computer network and video conferencing” (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998).

5.4. DESIGNING A TRAINING PROGRAM

In any organizational setting, success depends on whether the company trains its employees or not for workplace training gives employees the skills they need to perform well in their jobs. Training may involve a multi-week period that is why designing the suitable program must carefully be planned. Therefore, the best design might be as follow:

- √ Plan a detailed training outline (different from start to finish).
- √ Include (in the program) the training factors that motivate employees to both learn and apply what they learn in the workplace.
- √ Choose the right and suitable content (books, exercises and activities).
- √ Provide the needed material (Ipad, workbooks, power point slides, course activities and web and computer-based activities).
- √ Decide about the schedule so as not to disinterest employees (full day training is not as effective as half a day or three-fourth a day).
- √ Appraise and reward employees for using the new skills they acquired during their training.

- √ Involve the trainees in designing the program through conducting a needs analysis. Then, what does needs analysis mean?

6. NEEDS ANALYSIS

6.1. DEFINITION

Needs analysis or needs assessment has an important role in designing and carrying out an ESP course/program. It

refers to the tasks involved in gathering enough information that will serve as the basis for designing and developing the curriculum that should meet the needs of a particular group of learners. Needs analysis, therefore is the first step in designing a course.

English for Specific Purposes seeks basically to set the existing knowledge on a more scientific basis by establishing procedures to relate language analysis more closely to the learner's needs, thus an ESP course design process should start with identifying the Target Situation and then carrying out a rigorous analysis of the linguistic features of that situation. The identified features will form the syllabus of the ESP course and then apply the needs analysis.

6.2. NEEDS ANALYSIS IN ESP

Needs Analysis is one of the important criteria which were adopted and validated in ESP. Target Needs and Learner Needs analysis is considered as the corner stone of English for Specific Purposes that leads to a very focused course, Dudley-Evan and St. John (1998). On his side, Jordon (1997) proposes that Needs Analysis should be the *"starting point for dividing syllabuses, courses, materials and the kind of teaching and learning that takes place"*, thus the learner's purposes are placed in the central position within the framework of needs analysis. Furthermore, clear distinctions are made by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) to distinguish between Target Situation Needs (what the learner needs to do in the target situation) and Learning Needs (what the learner needs to do in order to learn). They break Target Needs down into three categories: Necessities, Lacks and Wants. Necessities are "what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in" the target situation". Lacks are the "necessities the learner needs". Wants are "what the learner wants or feels he needs".

6.3. APPROACHES TO NEEDS ANALYSIS

A careful needs analysis involves "Present Situation Analysis"(PSA) and

"Target Situation Analysis"(TSA). PSA aims at finding out the trainees' English proficiency level and their existing language requirements at the beginning of a language program as Dudley-Evans and St. John state *"A Present Situation Analysis estimates strengths and weaknesses in language, skills and learning experiences"* Dudley-Evans & St John (1998).

Whereas learners' language requirements, regarding the target situation are defined through TSA (Robinson. 1991). Bloor (1984) defines the former type of the analysis as a learner-centered needs analysis and the latter one as a target-centered analysis. Bloor emphasizes that operation of both analysis during a term is certainly desirable.

Robinson (1991) also holds that TSA and PSA are complementary and form an efficient form of needs analysis. Needs Analysis may be seen as a combination of TSA and PSA as noted, within the realm of English for Specific Purposes, one cannot rely either on Target Situation Analysis or Target Situation Analysis as a reliable indicator of what is needed to enhance learning and reaching the desired goals. Consequently, other approaches to needs analysis have been proposed; such as Pedagogic Needs Analysis.

6.3.1. PEDAGOGIC NEEDS ANALYSIS

Pedagogic Needs Analysis was proposed by West (1998) as an umbrella term to describe the following three elements of needs analysis. He states that shortcoming of Target Situation Analysis should be compensated for collecting data about the learner and the learning environment. Pedagogic Needs Analysis covers deficiency analysis, strategy analysis or learning analysis and means analysis.

6.3.2. DEFICIENCY ANALYSIS

Deficiency Analysis is defined as Lacks, so it is obvious that Deficiency Analysis is the route to cover from point A (Present Situation) to point B (Target Situation), Deficiency Analysis should provide data about the gap between present and target extra linguistic knowledge,

mastery of General English, Language Skills and Learning Strategy.

6.3.3. LEARNING NEEDS ANALYSIS

Learning needs analysis has to do with the strategies that learners employ in order to learn. In other words, how learners wish to learn rather than what they need to learn. Hutchinson and Waters(1987) advocate a learning centered approach in which learners ' learning needs play a vital role that 's why they suggest a framework for analyzing learning needs which consist of several questions, each divided into more detailed questions. The framework is as follow:

1-Why are the learners taking the course?

-Compulsory or optional.

-Apparent need or not.

-Are status, money, promotion involved?

-What do learners think they will achieve?

-What is their attitude towards the ESP course? Do they want really to improve their English?

2-How do learners learn?

-What is their learning background?

-What is their concept of teaching and learning?

-What methodology will appeal to them?

-What sort of techniques alienate them?

3-What sources are available?

-Number of the professional competence teachers.

-The attitude of the teachers towards ESP.

-Teachers ' knowledge of the subject content.

4-WHO are the learners?

-Age, sex, nationality

-What do they know already about English?

-What are their interests?

-What is their socio-cultural background?

-What teaching styles are they used to?

6.4. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Among several procedures, a questionnaires and an interview were

applied for the present research. The questionnaire was addressed to the target respondents who are the technicians whereas the interview was conducted with ESP trainer of the in-service training. Both the questionnaire and the interview have completed each other in a way to have an insight view of employees' English training context. What comes next is an interpretation of the questionnaire and the interview.

6.4.1. QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire is the most frequent and very concise method used in data collection. It is a preplanned set of questions designed to yield specific information to meet a particular need for research information about a pertinent topic. The Oxford dictionary definition gives a clearer definition ".... *A questionnaire is a written or printed form used in gathering information on some subject or subjects consisting of a list of questions to be submitted to one or more persons*". Thus the questionnaire can cover a large number of people or organizations; it can even cover a wide geographic area in which it permits a possible anonymity of respondents.

6.4.2. INTERVIEW

Interviewing is one of the major methods of data collection. It may be defined as two-way systematic conversation between an investigator and an informant to obtain information relevant to a specific study. It involves not only conversation, but also learning from the respondent s gestures, facial expressions and pauses, and his environment. Interviewing requires face-to-face contact or contact over the telephone. It is done by using a structured schedule or an unstructured guide.

"Hence, it is the responsibility of these language teacher involved in planning courses for given groups of learning for specific purposes, to determine accurately what these specific purposes are. Then the teacher is one step nearer being able to translate these needs into linguistic and pedagogic terms in order to produce and teach an effective course. There are

basically two formal ways of gathering the necessary information: by means of a structured interview”.

(Mackay,

1978)

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

7.1 QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS

As far as the technicians are concerned, among 12 respondents there were 12 samples of questionnaires have been filled and returned back with a percentage of 100%.The questionnaire was divided into two main parts. The first part concerned the technicians personal information in matter of gender, age and job experience in order to have a deep insight about the target respondents. This could help to know whether learning English may be a serious difficulty if they are too old . The second part concerned their professional information in matter of whether they really need an in-service training in which English is integrated as a subject matter. In other words, asking such question would show to what extent are the respondents interested in learning ESP. Another question was about the effects of learning ESP on technicians competencies and the benefits they got in matter of communication, learning new vocabulary and terminology. The results of the planned questionnaire revealed the following results:

Table1:Respondents'Personal Information

Item	Measure	Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	07	58.33%
	Male	05	41.66%
Age	30	01	8.33%
	30-40	08	66.66%
	40-50	03	25%
	≤50	00	00%
Job experience	10	01	8.33%
	10-20	04	33.33%
	20-30	06	50%
	≤ 30	01	8.33%

From the table above, it can be noticed that there are more females than men and most of the respondents are aged between 30 and 40 which means that they are not beginners. Whereas, the majority

have more than 20 years of experience with a percentage of 50%. It is important to mention that the more experienced the worker is the more aware he is about the need to up-date his knowledge. The next table demonstrates the professional side of the respondents. The technicians have responded to ten questions about their opinion about the importance of learning ESP, the in-service training whether it is good in addition to the benefits they obtained from it.

Table2:Respondents'professional information

	YES	%	NO	%
Do you greatly need ESP in your in-service training?	12	100%	00%	00%
Can you improve good communication in English?	03	25%	09	75%
Did you benefit from training (written English)?	08	66.66%	04	33.33%
Did you learn more vocabulary in English?	08	66.66%	04	33.33%
Do you think what you learnt is enough for you at the workplace?	00	00%	12	100%
What about the suitability of the program?	03	25%	09	75%
Do you need more trainings to improve your English?	12	100%	00	00%

As the table shows, all the respondents have demonstrated their interest in undergoing the in-service training in order to catch-up the path with the progress of technology in their field and they are all convinced that any type of training may

have positive effects on their outcomes. Yet, the lack for a suitable program stands as an obstacle against their wants or in other words benefits. For that reason, they have required for a training program that suits their needs, wants and interests.

7.2 INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

The interview which was conducted with the ESP trainer who is responsible of training the employees has revealed the following results:

Q1: Is training technicians important?

Let's say that training is part of the management of the company because as you know that all companies in the economic sector are in a continuous progress that is why technicians mainly know that they need training as a strategic means to catch up the path with the development technology improves every day.

Q2: What type of training do you offer them?

In fact, we plan three types of training for all employees. As far as the technicians are concerned, we offer them a practical training.

Q3: What are the objectives that you intend to reach by the end of this training?

Well! The main objective is to recycle their professional knowledge. That is to mean, they refresh their previous knowledge and learn about what has recently been introduced in the field of technical side as software applications.

Q4: What are the tasks related to technicians?

Generally speaking, technicians are responsible of maintaining different devices, supervising and transmission.

Q5: Do companies train their technicians every year?

Yes! Of course! Every year we receive technicians from different companies to be trained.

Q6: Do you think that you are qualified to train them?

Yes, I am qualified since I am an ESP teachers and I am experienced in teaching computer science students at the university.

Q7: Does the program fulfill their needs, wants and interests?

Unfortunately, there is no specialized program in this training because the trainees I mean the technicians have required for more. As you know that these trainees come from different companies which means different needs. Hence, they have required for a new program that suits their needs. Indeed, we are making efforts to design a common and suitable syllabus by collaborating with their managers.

8.RECOMMENDATIONS

To sum up, employees in Saida get benefit from in-service trainings. for example technicians who represent the case respondents of the current study undergo an in-service training offered by Dr. Moulay Tahar university in Saida. Yet, it is worth noticeable that though all the conditions as the materialized and the psychological sides are provided, the technicians face the problem of lack of a suitable program that stands as an obstacle against their needs, wants and interests.

Therefore and as a matter of fact, employees are aware of the importance the English in-service training they undergo plays in ameliorating their English competencies which encourage them to require for the better, but according to them it is not a matter of training for the sake of training that is to mean they have a target from the English training they undergo; it is to improve their English skills and improve their English professional performance. The findings have revealed that the respondents require for an appropriate program and this cannot be reached unless the trainer conduct needs analysis to involve them in selecting the needed materials and designing a program that can fit their demands.

9. CONCLUSION

To conclude, after having tested the hypotheses through submitting a questionnaire that was addressed to technicians from different Companies in addition to an interview conducted with the ESP trainer who takes part in the training, the results revealed that English for Specific

Purposes (ESP) is integrated as a subject in training employees particularly the technicians who are the case of the present study. Yet, the lack of conducting needs analysis with these trainees results in a mismatch between the trainer and the trainees. In other words, the trainer(s) prepare a program which is, according to their point of view, suitable for the demands of the economic sector. Besides, technicians require for an English program that can be specific to their technical work like software applications and hardware (equipments) in addition to the terminology that they need to know in order to solve any problem that may occur while installing any material.

Therefore, to overcome this problem this article ends with some fruitful suggestions of different kinds of tasks that may help the respondents to learn and practice at the same time. Indeed, technicians need to improve their reading and writing skills more than speaking and listening. Thus, proposing technical texts such as computer and its components, input, output and storage peripherals may help the respondents refine their knowledge. As far as terminology is concerned, learning English collocations and compound words will help them acquire more vocabulary where as the writing skill, trainees may practice it through gap filling as a start and move on to more difficult tasks like ordering statements and writing short passages.

In fact, the present study paves the way for further researches because training employees whose work requires English at the work place is still neglected by researchers and needs too much importance in order to ameliorate the status of ESP particularly in the economic sector.

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