

The Importance of Teaching ESP Course for Literature Studies

Farid BENMEZAL ¹, Yazid MEFTAH ²

¹University of Boumerdes, farid_baraki@yahoo.fr

²University of Boumerdes meftahyazid1976@yahoo.com

Received: 23/3/2024 Accepted: 2/6/2026 Published:12/6/2026

Abstract: The study attempts to explore the importance of introducing English for specific purposes in a course destined for literature studies. A test was conducted targeting 13 Master I and II students of literature and has revealed that most literature students in the department of English at Boumerdes University suffer from weak mastery over the terminology used when analyzing literary texts. This motivated the study to suggest the possible remedies to such an issue. The results of the study are unequivocal and show a real deficiency in the student's ability to identify or use literary devices in an appropriate way. The study recommends the introduction of a course that introduces the students to literary terminology and empowers them with the capacity to use them in a real-life learning context.

Key words: ESP, needs analysis, literature, literary devices

1. INTRODUCTION

The present work is an attempt to explore the possibility of adopting an ESP course for literature studies. Indeed, the use of ESP is always associated with the teaching of English in scientific fields such as computing, engineering, law, etc., but teaching ESP in the literary field is not very familiar to many researchers and practitioners.

However, some attempts have been made by researchers Corona & Garcia (1996), Hirvela (1990), and Spack (1985), who advocate the adoption of literature for specific purposes. Literature is a highly complex field, and it is one of the areas where students face difficulties analyzing literary texts, which are mainly due to their lack of mastery over literary terminology or phraseology. However, what is accepted as a normal practice in other fields shall also be extended to the literary training of EFL students and teachers. In other words, like many other training domains such as law, computing engineering, etc., literature requires specialized training to master the necessary terminology and phraseology before embarking on the complex process of analyzing and tackling the different literary text genres, imagery, and language styles such as figures, tropes, and other rhetorical devices that characterize the writer's works. It becomes then obvious that students who engage in the literary field need a preparatory course that introduces and makes them familiar with the variety of terminology and phraseology that they will tackle in their field of study.

The teaching of literary devices is not taken sufficiently into consideration in teaching literature. It is believed that students can learn them implicitly when analyzing literary texts. However, it has been noticed that students tend to analyze literary texts through paraphrasing rather than using literary devices as tools for better analysis. In fact, students acquire the vocabulary but without the exact meaning of these literary devices; consequently, they fail to make a distinction between the meaning of these sense devices and eventually apply them in their analysis.

The study aims at checking the extent to which Boumerdes students are able to understand, identify, and use these devices in the analysis of literary texts. It attempts to answer the following questions: Are students of literature able to match and identify literary devices correctly?

For this reason, a test was conducted targeting 13 Master I and II students of literature who were selected randomly. The test is composed of two parts. The instructions for the first part require the students to identify literary devices from a limited list that corresponds to the provided

definitions and examples. The second part of the test requires identifying literary devices in the provided examples.

2. Review of the Literature

English for specific purposes is an approach to teaching the English language that intends to respond to the needs of a particular learner's population. This approach takes decisions as far as the content to be taught and also the method to adopt to teach language, taking into consideration the learners motives to learn English (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Although ESP is an approach to teaching English that is destined for a particular population and addresses particular professional needs, its teaching does not differ from the teaching of general English. Therefore, "ESP must be seen as an approach, not as a product." Hutchinson and Waters (1987)

2.1 Needs Analysis

Needs analysis is defined as the presentation of the learners' wants, needs, and lacks before programming a course to respond to them. Burksaitiene (2008). In order to design a syllabus that reflects these needs, a syllabus designer has to undergo the following stages:

2.2 Register Analysis

In linguistics, a register is a language variety employed in a particular context; in the ESP domain, it is the identification of the lexical and grammatical features that are required in a particular domain. Alousque Isabel Negro (2016). The teachers or the syllabus designers select the vocabulary and the grammatical forms that are needed by the targeted domain. As Ewer and Hughes-Davies (1971) found, most general English text books neglect some grammatical forms that are very useful in the scientific domain, such as compound words, passive forms, conditional forms, and modal verbs. Thus, teachers have to take such particular forms into consideration when designing the syllabus for a specific purpose. Halliday et al. (1964) claimed that "Registers [...] differ primarily in form. The crucial criterion of any given register is to be found in its grammar and lexis. Every one of these specialized needs requires, before it can be met, appropriate teaching materials" (pp. 88, 190). The next level is discourse analysis.

2.3 Discourse or Rhetorical Analysis

The syllabus designer has to shift to a higher level of analysis, that is, to move from the sentence level to the discourse level. It is also necessary to highlight that each field has its own specificities as far as the discourse features are concerned. Thus, it is necessary to take these specificities into consideration when designing such syllabi Poljaković (2011)

2.4 Target Situation Analysis

This stage is very important as it depicts the profile of the learner's needs in terms of communication purposes, setting, means, language-required skills, functions, and forms. Chambers (1980)

2.5 Skills and Strategies Analysis

The syllabus designed has to identify the most important skills that the learners will need in their professional field. Thus, the teacher has to focus on particular skills, such as writing or reading. Then, teach the learners' strategies that will help them write well, such as how to generate ideas, plan, revise, and proofread their texts in an efficient manner; or, when reading, how to skim and scan a text for an idea or understand words in context.

3. Methodology

To evaluate the students' mastery of literary terminology, a test was conducted targeting 13 Master I and II students of literature who were randomly selected. The test is composed of two parts. The instructions for the first part require the students to identify literary devices from a limited list that corresponds to the provided definitions and examples. The second part of the test requires the identification of literary devices in the given examples.

Part I Test Results

	Score	Percentage (%)
Average	04	30.77
Below the average	09	69.23

Table 1: Matching the Literary Devices to their Definitions

The first part of the test represents a set of concepts that the students are required to match with their corresponding definitions; the results clearly show that the bulk of the participants (69.23%) are incapable of matching the concepts with their meaning. This proves that the students at the department of English at Boumerdes University have a very weak mastery over the concepts that they are supposed to use in their daily analysis of the literary texts.

The results of the second test represent the use of these devices or the students' capacity to identify them when they are used by authors in texts.

Part II Test Results

	Scores	Percentage (%)
Average	00	00
Below the average	13	100

Table 2: Identifying the Literary Devices in Sentences

The results of the second part of the test are unequivocal, as all the students (100%) who participated in this experiment failed to identify the devices when used in concrete examples.

4. Analysis of the Test Results

These devices are rudimentary and constitute the basis that students of literature since the license first year should learn for understanding literature. The results, however, display the students' lack of mastery of these devices. The majority of the students fail to match the concepts with their definition (69.23%), and even when the students are able to understand the meaning of the devices, they fail to identify them in the given examples. These results confirm that the language of literature and the terminology used to describe literary texts are difficult even for master students specialized in literature. Though these students are acquainted with these literary terms, they do not know the exact meaning of these terms which are necessary to explore a literary text appropriately. Acquiring some understanding of some of the different literary devices will help students gain a deeper appreciation of a work of literature, empowering them with the knowledge they need to be able to interpret the literary texts. In order to solve this problematic issue, the present study recommends the following.

5. Recommendations

To overcome this problem, a module entitled English for Literary Purposes is suggested to be included for students of English in the first license semester. Accordingly, a method of teaching literary devices with gradual steps is also suggested, as illustrated in the following example.

The teachers can introduce a figure of speech through the indicated steps

I. Step 1: Teachers introduce the literary devices with examples

Definition: “Metonymy” is A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is substituted for another that is related.

Sample:

Example 1: As if to keep / The life from spilling.

Explanation: In this example, the sense device is metonymy because blood is essential to life, and the two are intuitively related.

Example 2: The brushes worked fast (the painters worked quickly).

Explanation

: In this example, the sense device is metonymy because a “brush” is one of the painting tools.

Step 2: Teachers provide examples and ask the students to choose from a list of two sense devices the appropriate one.

Sample: Choose the appropriate device used in the following examples and their explanations

Example 1: Your teeth are like stars (Metaphor /simile)

Explanation: Teeth and stars are expressly compared with one another through the use of “like”

Example 2: The storm attacked the town with great rage. (Personification /simile)

Explanation: The storm which is non-human is given a human attribute which is rage.

Step 3: The teachers provide examples and ask the students to identify literary devices (no list is provided)

Sample: What literary devices are used in the following examples?

Example 1: This tree is the god of the forest. (Metaphor)

Example 2: The tree felt smooth as sandstone. (Simile)

Example 3: The car ran a marathon down the highway. (Personification)

Step 4: teachers ask the students to identify and explain given literary devices from literary texts

Sample: Identify the sense devices of the underlined words and explain them.

O what a multitude they seemed, these flowers of London town!
Seated in companies they sit, with radiance all their own.
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,
Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.

Answer:

“These flowers” is a metaphor because he compares children to flowers.

“The lamb” is a symbol of Jesus Christ as both suffering and triumphant.

Step 5: the teachers ask their students to identify and explain literary devices from literary texts (the literary devices are not specified by the teachers)

Sample

Identify and explain literary devices in the following text:

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Possible answer 1: “I wandered lonely as a cloud” is a simile. The poet compares his loneliness with a single cloud.

Possible answer 2: “Fluttering and dancing in the breeze” shows personification as it attributes human-like movements to daffodils.

6. CONCLUSION

The complexity of teaching literature and the necessity of equipping students with the necessary knowledge to master the terminology that they need to analyze the literary texts are important, if not critical, to ensure the good training of the students who embark on this challenging domain. As shown by the results of the present study, the students of literature in the department of English at Boumerdes University have very shallow knowledge of literary devices, and the issues become more serious as all the students were incapable of identifying these devices when provided with concrete examples. Of course, there is a need to mention that the results of the present study cannot be generalized to all the students, but the population that participated in the study reveals a real problem that can explain the poor results of most students who are engaged in literary

training and the reluctance of the majority of the students to choose literature as a field of study.

The present study also recommends some practical exercises that can be used by teachers to inculcate these devices in a very simple and pedagogical way. The activities are easy to use, but they cannot substitute for a well-designed module that will tackle the terminology in a well-organized framework and take the needs of the learners who study literature into consideration.

7. Bibliography List:

Alousque Isabel Negro (2016) Developments in ESP: from register analysis to a Genre-Based and CLIL-Based Approach, *Revista de Lenguas para Fines Específicos* 22.1 (2016), pp. 190-21
<http://dx.doi.org/10.20420/rlfe.2016.0096>

Anthony Laurence (1997) English for specific purposes: What does it mean? Why is it different?
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267631304>

Benavent Gabriela Torregrosa & Sánchez-Reyes Sonsoles (2015)
Target Situation as a Key Element for ESP (Law Enforcement)
Syllabus Design *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 173:143-148 DOI:[10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.02.044](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.02.044)

Chambers, F. 1980. «A re-evaluation of needs analysis in ESP» *ESP Journal* 1(1): 25-33.

Chin-Ling Lee (2016) Principles and Practices of ESP Course Design—A Case Study of a University of Science and Technology. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 94-105, February 2016

Halliday, M. A. McIntosh and P. Stevens. (1964). *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching*. Harlow: Longman.

Hutchinson, Tom & Waters, Alan (1987). *English for Specific Purposes: A learner-centered approach*. Cambridge University Press.

Li Juan (2014) Needs Analysis: An Effective Way in Business English Curriculum Design. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 9, pp. 1869-1874, September 2014 doi:10.4304/tpls.4.9.1869-1874

Poljaković Ivan (2011)Discourse Analysis in an ESP Classroom. Discourse and Dialogue Studies between Theory, Research Method, and Application. V. Karabalić, M. A. Varga, L. Pon (ur.). Bern: Peter Lang Verlag 2011, 251-262.

6. Appendices

Test 1

Complete the table with the term from the box below that corresponds to the definition and the example

A-

Metonymy- Zeugma - Irony- Personification - Paradox-
Synecdoche–*Pun* - Conceit -Hyperbole- Simile- Symbol-Metaphor-
image

	Terms	Definitions
1	Personification	means to speak of an impersonal thing, such as a season, a natural element, any object, a country, etc., as though it were a person. Example: July is dressed up and playing her tune.
2	Pun	<i>Is a joke based on the interplay of homophones.</i> Example: <i>The tallest building in town is the library — it has thousands of stories!</i>
3	Synecdoche	is a way of naming a thing: the word for a part of a thing is substituted for the whole. "All hands on deck!" Example: I bought a new set of wheels this morning.
4	Paradox	two things that should not be able to exist at the same time are said, in a poem, to exist at the same time. Example:

		For example, "A poem should be palpable and mute/As a globed
5	Simile	is an explicit, or clear and direct, comparison between two things that are basically unlike using dead-giveaway words such as "like", "as though", "seems", "similar to", "than", or "as". Example: My mom is like a fire
6	Hyperbole	is a figure of speech and literary <i>device</i> that creates heightened effect through deliberate exaggeration. Example: 'I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.
7	Zeugma	is a literary term for using one word to modify two other words, in two different ways. Example: She broke his car and his heart.
8	Symbol	means what it is, but at the same time it represents something else, too. Example: A dove symbolizes peace.
9	Metonymy	is a way of naming a thing: a thing closely related to the thing actually meant is used to name it. Example: He came from excellent blood
10	Metaphor	is an indirect comparison between two things that are basically unlike. Her eyes were diamonds.
11	Image	Means a "word picture" having to do with the five senses--touch, smell, taste, sound, movement, and especially sight. Example: Cannon behind them/ Volleyed and thundered;

12	Irony	is a situation in which one thing is said but another is actually meant, or in which the outcome of a situation is the opposite of what one would have expected it to be. Example: Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink,
13	Conceit	is a type of figurative language in which the writer establishes a comparison between two very different concepts or objects. Example: My life is like a free online game, people seem to be playing with it.

B. Identify the sense devices in the following examples and complete the table

	Sense devices	Examples
1		Friendly as a rattlesnak
2		The house pleaded for a new coat of paint
3		It was dark and dim in the forest
4		A poem should be palpable and mute
5		The fire eye in the clouds
6		The woman moved like sish
7		All hands on deck!
8		The White House will be making an announcement around noon.
9		Thy firmness makes my circle just,
10		the lecture went on forever
11		Dost sometimes Counsel take-and sometimes Tea.
12		If they be two, they are two so As stiff twin compasses are two; Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show To move, but doth, if th' other do.

13		'It is a long tail, certainly,' said Alice, looking down <i>with wonder at the</i> Mouse's tail; 'but <i>why</i> do you call <i>it</i> sad?' — <i>Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland.</i>

Test 2

A- Complete the table with the right term that corresponds to the definition

B-

	Terms	Definitions
1	Personification	means to speak of an impersonal thing, such as a season, a natural element, any object, a country, etc., as though it were a person. Example: July is dressed up and playing her tune.
2	<i>Pun</i>	is a joke based on the interplay of homophones. Example: The tallest building in town is the library — it has thousands of stories!
3	Synecdoche	is a way of naming a thing: the word for a part of a thing is substituted for the whole. "All hands on deck!" Example: I bought a new set of wheels this morning.
4	Paradox	two things that should not be able to exist at the same time are said, in a poem, to exist at the same time. Example: For example, "A poem should be palpable and mute/As a globed
5	Simile	is an explicit, or clear and direct, comparison between two things that are basically unlike using

		dead-giveaway words such as "like", "as though", "seems", "similar to", "than", or "as". Example: My mom is like a fire
6	Hyperbole	is a figure of speech and literary <i>device</i> that creates heightened effect through deliberate exaggeration. Example: 'I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.
7	Zeugma	is a literary term for using one word to modify two other words, in two different ways. Example: She broke his car and his heart.
8	Symbol	means what it is, but at the same time it represents something else, too. Example: A dove symbolizes peace.
9	Metonymy	is a way of naming a thing: a thing closely related to the thing actually meant is used to name it. Example: He came from excellent blood
10	Metaphor	is an indirect comparison between two things that are basically unlike. Her eyes were diamonds.
11	Image	Means a "word picture" having to do with the five senses--touch, smell, taste, sound, movement, and especially sight. Example: Cannon behind them/ Volleyed and thundered.
12	Irony	is a situation in which one thing is said but another is actually meant, or in which the outcome of a situation is the opposite of what one would have expected it to be. Example: Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink,

13	Conceit	is a type of figurative language in which the writer establishes a comparison between two very different concepts or objects. Example: My life is like a free online game, people seem to be playing with it.
----	---------	---

B. Identify the sense devices in the following examples and complete the table

	Sense devices	Examples
1	Irony	Friendly as a rattlesnak
2	Personification	The house pleaded for a new coat of paint
3	Image	It was dark and dim in the forest
4	Paradox	A poem should be palpable and mute
6	Metaphor	The fire eye in the clouds
7	Simile	The woman moved like fish
8	Synecdoche	All hands on deck!
9	Metonymy	The White House will be making an announcement around noon.
10	Symbol	Thy firmness makes my circle just,
11	Hyperbole	the lecture went on forever.
12	Zeugma	Dost sometimes Counsel take-and sometimes Tea.
13	Conceit	If they be two, they are two so As stiff twin compasses are two ; Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show To move, but doth, if th' other do.
	Pun	<i>'It is a long tail, certainly,' said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; 'but why do you call it sad?' — Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland.</i>