



Investigating the Impact of Digital Tools on ESP Courses:

Case of Tablet Use

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Abstract

English for Specific Purposes is tailored to learners' needs and objectives. Incorporating digital tools can greatly benefit students' learning by increasing their motivation and engagement. These tools should align with the course content, specific skills being taught, and individual student needs. This study examines how using tablets affects ESP students' learning outcomes in tourism courses. For this purpose, three research instruments are used: a questionnaire, classroom observation, and a face-to-face interview. The participants are 30 second-year EFL students and five teachers selected from the University of Badji Mokhtar Annaba.

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1. Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) represents an approach to teaching English as an additional language that tailors the course, content, and objectives to the specific needs of the learners. Unlike other pedagogical approaches, it focuses on the target audience (Lesiak-Bielawska, 2015). ESP originated from the need for a universal language for international communication, driven by the growing influence of technology and business. Another significant factor that contributed to ESP's development was the shift in language teaching from focusing on grammar to applying language in specific contexts (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). This shift highlights the importance of using language to communicate in real-life situations rather than just memorising rules. Furthermore, this approach aligns with the constructivist learning perspective, which emphasises activities that promote the practical use of language (Hart, 2003). In ESP classes, it is important to choose activities and materials that cater to the learners' needs and wants, especially in fields like tourism, commerce, engineering, and medicine, where the language varies. However, this can be challenging for teachers, so many have turned to technology to enhance their teaching methods (Lesiak-Bielawska, 2015).

Technology has dramatically influenced ESP pedagogy and language learning as teachers strive to integrate computer and mobile phone technology into their lessons (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). Technology

integration in ESP instruction is becoming increasingly indispensable in light of today's generation's contemporary reliance on technological devices and electronic information. Significantly, it is imperative to note that ESP students possess diverse learning styles, similar to students in other academic disciplines. Accordingly, to fulfil learners' requirements and desires, it is imperative to employ a varied array of pedagogical approaches within the classroom setting. Hence, the primary objective of the current investigation is to integrate technology, particularly tablets, within English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instructional sessions; the study emphasizes the benefits of using digital tools in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes. These tools offer learners various advantages, including catering to different learning styles and intelligences, breaking the monotony, boosting student motivation, and making information processing and acquisition easier.

2. Literature Review

2.1 ESP Classes

The historical roots of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) pedagogy go back to the ancient Greek and Roman societies (Dudley-Evans & ST Johns, 1998). The phenomenon known as ESP was not a structured or intentional movement but instead emerged due to multiple converging trends. ESP has exhibited varying modes of operation and functionality across different geographic regions. However, it is possible to discern three fundamental factors that have

contributed to the genesis of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs. These include the exigencies of an evolving global landscape, a transformation in linguistics, and an enhanced emphasis on the needs of learners (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) represents a pedagogical methodology that strives to provide students with targeted language instruction relevant to their specific professional needs and contexts of use (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Furthermore, regarding the definition of ESP,

Some people described ESP as simply being the teaching of English for any purpose that could be specified. Others, however, were more precise describing it as the teaching of English used in academic studies or the teaching of English for vocational or professional purposes.

(Anthony, 1997, pp. 9-10)

English for Specific Purposes, commonly known as ESP, aims to cater to specific fields or subjects. It may use a distinct teaching approach compared to General English, particularly in specific teaching settings. The ESP program is mainly for grown-up learners who are pursuing higher education or working professionals, but it can also be beneficial for high school students. Such a program is

generally for intermediate or advanced learners, but beginners may also benefit from it, provided they have some basic knowledge of the language systems (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p. 4).

When teaching ESP, the methods are similar to those used in teaching any other language. The main teaching activities include shaping the input, motivating the learners to learn, managing learning strategies, and promoting practice and usage (Stevens, 1988). ESP classes involve several essential steps: identifying the needs of the learners, designing the course and syllabus, selecting or creating relevant materials, teaching and learning, and evaluating the outcomes (Dudley-Evans & St Johns, 1998). However, regarding the teaching materials, is it possible to find academic textbooks on ESP? (Johns, 1991). In reality, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers often strive to create a curriculum that caters to the specific learning needs of their students. However, they usually work within constrained circumstances. (Johns, 1991). Additionally, finding suitable materials for ESP can present challenges, and it is improbable that a course customised to the specific needs of a particular group of learners will be readily accessible (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Being an ESP teacher requires flexibility, as it involves switching from being a general language teacher to a specific-purpose teacher, adapting to various learners and tasks (Robinson, 1991). Moreover, flexibility also involves employing an eclectic approach to teaching methods, as this allows for using any

technique or strategy that suits a particular situation. Ultimately, the effectiveness of this approach depends on the teacher's knowledge and approach to language teaching (Miliani, 1994). Therefore, teaching ESP requires teachers' adaptability to use various teaching tools and strategies that are appropriate for the situation. The success of teaching depends on the strategies implemented by the teacher.

2.2 Educational Technology

Educational technology refers to a "...theory and practice of design, development, utilisation, management, and evaluation of processes and resources for learning." (Seels & Richey, 1994, p. 9). Various researchers have provided different definitions of educational technology; for example, it represents the process of using scientific knowledge about the conditions that affect teaching and learning to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and training (Leith, 1966). Moreover, it refers to implementing laws and incorporating advancements in science and technology (Kulkarni, 1969). In addition, educational technology means utilising contemporary skills and techniques to meet the demands of education, and training is essential. This involves using various media and methods to facilitate learning and controlling the learning environment." (Unwin, 1969). In its straightforward words, educational technology is defined as a "...field involved in the facilitation of human learning" (Ely, 1972, p. 36). Therefore, educational technology pertains to the utilisation of various digital tools to aid in the process of learning.

The impact of technology on education, especially in language learning, has been considerable. It has influenced the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, which are all crucial for language acquisition. The teaching and learning of English as a foreign language significantly improved due to technology, resulting in engaging learning experiences and better teaching methods (Solanki, Shyamlee & Phil, 2012). In fact, computers offer interactive visual media with a distinct instructional advantage for subjects requiring social interaction or problem-solving, such as learning a second language or resolving interpersonal issues (Nunan, 1999). As such, educational technology provides invaluable resources for the language learning process, which can facilitate and enhance language development.

2.3 Advantages of Technology in Education

As previously, mentioned, educational technology aims to enhance the learning process by catering to learners' auditory and visual needs. It considers three crucial factors: the level of students, the interests and expertise of teachers, and the institution's objectives. This innovative teaching approach connects schools to the internet, providing opportunities like video conferencing and bringing the world into the classroom (Nomass, 2013). Educational technology offers a vast array of tools, including audio, video, pictures, animations, illustrations, and presentations. For instance, audio-visual aids are fascinating for teaching and learning EFL.

Students enjoy learning in language classes equipped with audio-visual materials as it motivates them and makes the classroom fun (Abdullah, 2014).

Additionally, EFL teachers can use songs to capture their students' attention to listen to the target language. Songs can help learners acquire a broad range of vocabulary. Teachers can assess their student's understanding of the song by asking them questions about its content after listening to it. Furthermore, listening to different songs enhances learners' motivation and improves their listening and speaking skills (Veronika, 2007). In addition, EFL teachers can use pedagogical and authentic videos readily available online. These videos are a valuable resource for teaching purposes; in fact, using a "...video in the classroom offers exciting possibilities for language teaching and learning" (Lonergan, 1995, p. 1). Teachers use videos to enhance their lessons' comprehension, while learners depend on them to improve their speaking and listening abilities by listening to native speakers (Lonergan, 1995).

Moreover, digital tools enable learners to engage in authentic language practice, especially those who may feel too shy to speak. Through various activities these tools provide, learners can expand their knowledge of the target language and improve their skills. This wider access to information ultimately leads to a more effective language-learning experience (Rodinadze & Zarbazoaia, 2012). Teachers recognise the importance of technology as a valuable tool in the classroom, promoting active learning and teaching methods that

foster student participation (Wekke & Hamid, 2013).

2.4 Digital Tools and ESP

In the realm of ESP education, digital tools have become increasingly popular tool. ESP teachers now use various resources such as multimedia packages and online sources to immerse learners in real-life situations and enhance their language skills (Arnó-Macía, 2012). Integrating digital tools into the ESP curriculum offers students numerous learning opportunities and advantages. These include engaging in interactive and communicative activities tailored to their professions and tools for providing feedback and self-evaluation within that specific context (Butler-Pascoe & Wiburg, 2003). When teaching an ESP course, such as Business English, digital tools can be incredibly helpful in facilitating successful learning and increasing students' enthusiasm and motivation. These tools encompass a variety of resources that align with the course content, skills, and individual needs. Examples of digital tools include mobile devices like smartphones, laptops, tablets, and media players (Teodorescu, 2015) and software, hardware, operating systems, mobile applications, storage, and networking (Robinson et al., 2019).

Using digital tools in ESP courses provides opportunities for interaction, informative actions, and collaboration in learning (Motteram, 2013). Using ICT can greatly enhance collaborative learning, resulting in lessons of higher quality. Learners can also engage in authentic communication within their professional

groups, gain career-relevant knowledge, and express their thoughts (Arnó-Macià, 2012). This sense of empowerment benefits students and lecturers, making adopting ICT a valuable addition to the educational process (Keshtiarast & Salehi, 2020). In addition, using digital tools, for example, mobile devices and learning tools, enabled students with various learning styles to engage in the learning process within modern classrooms (Albadi, 2016).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The current investigation examines the influence of digital tools, case of tablet use, on the performance of ESP students in tourism courses. The research employs three methods: a questionnaire with ten closed-ended questions, classroom observation, and a face-to-face interview with six structured questions. The study included 30 second-year EFL students and five teachers from the University of Badji Mokhtar Annaba, who were selected through a simple random sampling method to participate. The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the use of tablets affect ESP courses?
2. Do ESP students enjoy using tablets?
3. Do ESP teachers find using tablets to be beneficial?

Based on the aforementioned inquiries, the researcher formulated the subsequent hypotheses:

- 1- Tablets are valuable digital tools that can enhance the teaching and learning of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) within the education system.
- 2- ESP students find using tablets more beneficial for their ESP learning.
- 3- Teachers find incorporating new digital tools like tablets into the learning process more effective than relying solely on traditional materials.

At the start of the research, the participants were briefed on the essence of the study. Then, the ESP students participating in the present research engaged in a five-week tourism course. During the five-week ESP tourism course, the students used tablets to explore the effects of tablet use on ESP courses. Classroom observation was conducted as part of the research methodology, and at the end of the course, participants responded to questionnaires about their views on the impact of tablet use. ESP teachers were interviewed to provide their opinions about the impact of tablet use on ESP courses. The questionnaire administered to the students during the study provided numerical data that underwent quantitative analysis, while the qualitative data obtained from the classroom observation and teachers' interview were subjected to qualitative analysis. Then, the results of the three different research tools have been converged to determine if the data corroborated or contradicted each other.

3.2 Research Results

The participants were given a ten-question survey as part of the research. Table n°1 displays the questionnaire's results. According to the table, 16 students (53.33%) found ESP courses interesting, while 14 students (46.66%) were not interested. However, 25 students (83.33%) found ESP courses challenging. Additionally, 23 students (76.66%) believe that the teaching method for ESP courses needs improvement. The first three inquiries of the survey focused on the students' attitudes towards ESP courses. Regarding integrating digital tools, 25 students (83.33%) said that using digital tools helped with their ESP courses, while 22 students claim that these tools motivated

them. 27 students (90%) agreed that using tablets helped them understand better, and 22 students (73.33%) claimed that tablets made them more enthusiastic. Furthermore, 26 students (86.66%) stated that using tablets provided them with valuable information. Interestingly, 30 students (100%) agreed that using tablets offered opportunities to practice language skills in real-life situations. Finally, 27 students (90%) said that tablets catered to various learning styles. Therefore, after five weeks of ESP courses in tourism, students found tablets to be helpful and beneficial as they improved their understanding, provided authentic materials, and allowed real-life language-use situations to help apply language in context

Table 1. Students' Questionnaire Results

Question	Answers			
	YES	Percentage	No	Percentage
1. ESP courses are interesting.	16	53.33%	14	46.66%
2. ESP courses are challenging.	25	83.33%	05	16.66%
3. ESP teaching pedagogy is flawless.	7	23.33%	23	76.66%
4. Digital tools facilitate the ESP course.	25	83.33%	05	16.66%
5. Digital tools motivate ESP students.	22	73.33%	08	26.66%
6. ESP students can enhance their understanding of tourism courses by using tablets to access authentic materials.	27	90%	03	10%
7. Tablets increase ESP students' enthusiasm.	22	73.33%	08	26.66%
8. Tablets offer ESP students a significant amount of information.	26	86.66%	04	13.33%
9. Tablets offer opportunities for practising language skills in real-life situations.	30	100%	0	0%
10. Tablets cater to the various learning styles of students.	27	90%	03	10%

During the study, a classroom observation was conducted to evaluate the use of tablets in ESP tourism courses. The observation yielded positive results, as shown in figure n°1. The students were more enthusiastic and motivated when using the tablets. They remained focused on the task, which improved their concentration and satisfaction

Fig.1. Classroom Observation Results



with the information provided. The tablets also facilitated the participants' active engagement in the ESP course, exposing them to authentic language use and materials. Moreover, the tablet use encouraged students to work independently, promoting their learner autonomy and self-reliance.

Finally, as the final part of the study, five teachers were interviewed to gather their opinions on using digital tools, specifically tablets, to facilitate ESP courses. Based on the data presented in Table 2, it is evident that teachers acknowledge the necessity to tailor teaching strategies in ESP instruction to match the students' skill levels, requirements, and preferences. A standardized approach is ineffective, and a flexible pedagogy is required to achieve optimal results. Therefore, teachers must

adapt to different teaching strategies and adopt an eclectic approach. However, teachers find digital tools to be helpful, as they acknowledge the benefits of such tools in facilitating ESP courses. Tablet use, in particular, is beneficial, but its usefulness depends on the circumstances, students' levels, and the teaching and learning goals. It is crucial to note that such tools require the teacher's intervention, as materials and content selection are critical when dealing with tablets. While digital tools like

computers and mobiles are popular, tablets are less popular because they are not easily affordable for most students. Nevertheless, tablets can facilitate the ESP course by providing various formats for presenting information, breaking the routine,

satisfying different learning styles, and providing access to authentic materials and language-use situations. Finally, teachers encourage using tablets in ESP courses to improve students' outcomes.

Table 2. Teachers' Interview Results

Question 1	Do you believe that the prevailing ESP pedagogy of reading is flawless?
Teacher 1	It is difficult to claim that any particular teaching method is without flaws.
Teacher 2	Teaching pedagogy necessitates adaptation and eclecticism.
Teacher 3	Change and development are essential.
Teacher 4	The most effective approach to teaching depends on the individual student's level and learning style. Therefore, a single pedagogy may not always be sufficient.
Teacher 5	ESP courses can be quite demanding and challenging. As such, it is essential to demonstrate and utilise strategies and methods that meet the needs of both teachers and students. Nonetheless, this can be a challenging task to accomplish.
Question 2	Can the integration of digital tools develop the quality of ESP courses?
Teacher 1	Of course, integrating digital tools would be helpful and beneficial.
Teacher 2	Definitely! Utilising digital tools can efficiently tackle various teaching obstacles, cater to different learner preferences, and achieve learning goals.
Teacher 3	Using digital tools can effectively motivate students and add variety to their learning routine, ultimately benefiting their learning process. Additionally, these tools offer a wealth of information that can cater to learners' specific wants and needs.
Teacher 4	Digital tools provide authentic materials, which are crucial for ESP courses.
Teacher 5	The trend of integrating digital tools is on the rise in the modern era, so it is important for teachers to stay updated to cater to their learners' needs. Additionally, digital tools can offer genuine scenarios for language usage, which can be satisfying for learners.
Question 3	Can the use of tablets facilitate the ESP course?
Teacher 1	It depends on the specific circumstances, level, and intended goal.
Teacher 2	Certainly!
Teacher 3	Of course!

Teacher 4	Yes, tablets can be helpful.
Teacher 5	Certainly! However, the guidance of teachers is necessary, and it is essential to select appropriate materials and content.
Question 4	Have you ever used tablets for you ESP courses?
Teacher 1	Never...
Teacher 2	I used computers but not tablets.
Teacher 3	Certainly!
Teacher 4	I asked my students to use their mobiles.
Teacher 5	I used computer and mobile-assisted learning. However, using tablets is not affordable; we cannot assume that all students possess tablets.
Question 5	How can tablets facilitate the ESP course?
Teacher 1	There are various formats available for presenting information.
Teacher 2	Breaking the routine is essential, as they satisfy the different learning styles of learners.
Teacher 3	Digital tools provide students with access to authentic materials.
Teacher 4	Authentic language-use situations and not only pedagogical ones.
Teacher 5	Initially, they are new materials. Then, through these materials, students can access an endless supply of information in various formats. This enables them to connect with authentic materials and real-life language usage scenarios.
Question 6	Do you encourage the use of digital tools for ESP courses?
Teacher 1	Of course!
Teacher 2	Certainly!
Teacher 3	Yes!
Teacher 4	Of course!
Teacher 5	Of course! However, they cannot replace the teacher.

4. CONCLUSION

ESP refers to an approach to teaching English as a foreign language that focuses on tailoring the course, content, and objectives to the specific needs of the learners. In ESP classes, selecting activities and materials that cater to the

learners' requirements is essential. With today's generation's increasing reliance on technological devices and electronic information, integrating technology into ESP instruction is becoming more critical. It is important to note that ESP students, like students in other academic disciplines, have diverse learning styles. Therefore, it

is necessary to use various pedagogical approaches within the classroom setting to meet learners' needs and desires. The current investigation aims to incorporate digital tools, particularly tablets, into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instructional sessions. These tools provide learners with numerous benefits, such as catering to different learning styles and intelligences, breaking the monotony, boosting student motivation, and making information processing and acquisition easier. This research used questionnaires, classroom observation, and interview as research instruments. The results indicate that tablets facilitate the ESP course as they provide unlimited access to various information in various formats. Furthermore, using tablets represents an innovative tool that increases students' motivation, concentration, self-reliance, and learner autonomy. ESP students and teachers both share positive attitudes toward using tablets in ESP courses to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

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6. Appendices

Appendix A: Students Questionnaire

Dear students,

You are cordially asked to take part in our research article, which aims to analyse the impact of tablet use on the development of the ESP course at the University of Badji Mokhtar Annaba. Your input is valuable to us; therefore, we kindly request your assistance in completing the questionnaire forms provided. Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Question	Answers	
	YES	No
1. ESP courses are interesting.		
2. ESP courses are challenging.		
3. ESP teaching pedagogy is flawless.		
4. Digital tools facilitate the ESP course.		

5. Digital tools motivate ESP students.		
6. ESP students can enhance their understanding of tourism courses by using tablets to access authentic materials.		
7. Tablets increase ESP students' enthusiasm.		
8. Tablets offer ESP students a significant amount of information.		
9. Tablets offer opportunities for practising language skills in real-life situations.		
10. Tablets cater to the various learning styles of students.		

Appendix B: Classroom Observation Checklist

Observation		
	✓	x
1. Motivation		
2. Enthusiasm		
3. Concentration		
4. Satisfaction		
5. Chaos		
6. authentic materials		
7. authentic langue-use situations		
8. Self-reliance		
9. Learner autonomy		

Appendix C: Interview

1. Do you believe that the prevailing ESP pedagogy of reading is flawless?
2. Can the integration of digital tools develop the quality of ESP courses?
3. Can the use of tablets facilitate the ESP course?
4. Have you ever used tablets for you ESP courses?
5. How can tablets facilitate the ESP course?
6. Do you encourage the use of digital tools for ESP courses?