

**Teaching ESP by EFL Teachers  
From Mission Impossible to Mission Feasible  
Developing Common-Core Communication Skills**

**Maamar MISSOUM\***

University of Blida 2, Algeria

ORCID identifier: 0000-0002-9814-9422

[maamar\\_missoum@yahoo.fr](mailto:maamar_missoum@yahoo.fr)

*Received: 30./11/2023   Accepted: 16./12/2023   Published: 31./01/2024*

**Abstract:**

The literature on the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) situation in Algeria has substantiated the dilemma teachers often face about the contents to teach in ESP courses. This research aims at exploring a possible solution to the conundrum of ESP syllabi. The research methodology used to achieve the research purpose consists of analysing the ESP needs of employees in the petroleum sector in Southern Algeria. The data collected were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The findings indicate that the mission of ESP teachers, especially those who have training in teaching EFL only, can become more feasible by adopting a common-core communicative syllabus. Accordingly, ESP teachers are offered in this paper a communicative common-core flexible framework for ESP courses along with a simple and economical needs analysis procedure. Hopefully, these suggestions will contribute in making ESP courses more conducive to success and satisfaction for both teachers and learners.

**Keywords:** Challenges – Communicative Common-Core Syllabus – Course Design – EFL ESP Teacher – Needs Analysis

---

\* *Corresponding author*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

After graduation with a BA in English, I was called on to teach at a secondary school and a university English department in Algeria. I soon realised that teaching is a multi-faceted challenge for novice teachers (what to teach, how to teach, assess learners, manage class, etc.). The challenge was much higher when I was recruited to teach ESP in a university department and later for petroleum companies in Southern Algeria. Research on the Algerian ESP situation has substantiated several challenges that ESP teachers have been facing. Missoum (forthcoming) did a meta-analysis of fifty-five (55) of these studies. A good understanding of the challenges facing teachers and learners in the learning process is essential to improve the quality of such process. The present research starts with a brief review of challenges that may be making ESP teachers' mission quite impossible. Then, it pursues the research aim of seeking solutions to the challenge of determining the contents to teach/learn in ESP courses. To achieve its aims, the present article proceeds as follows. After an introduction outlining the research topic, problem, purpose and rationale, the background section reviews the key challenges facing ESP teachers in Algeria. Then, the research method is described in terms of the context, participants, research instruments, and data treatment. It is followed by a discussion of the key findings and implications.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Key Challenges Facing ESP Teachers in Algeria

The mission of ESP teachers may be the most difficult in the field of English language teaching. "The situation is starkly characterised by unrealistic and unfair expectations from ESP teachers, which makes their mission quite impossible" (Missoum, forthcoming). Missoum's (forthcoming) meta-analysis of research on the Algerian ESP situation yielded the following main challenges:

**a. Lack of ESP Course Syllabi:** When it relates to the learners' needs, as Khaldi observed, ESP is often reduced to lexical and syntactical issues (1990). This is probably due to serious issues in ESP syllabus design as according to Afia & Mami, "there are no specialized ESP course designers

who can provide specifications for course content and methodology” (2020:4). Thus, the ESP teacher must immediately design a syllabus. According to Missoum (forthcoming), in all the Algerian university contexts investigated by fifty-five studies, the departments did not provide the ESP teachers with an ESP syllabus. The current courses mostly failed to meet the need of the learners probably because a formal needs analysis was rarely conducted (See for example, Assassi, 2020; Benyelles, 2013; Benzerdjeb, 2021; Hamdani & Ouahmiche, 2022; Hadj Djelloul, 2021; Khaldi, 1995; cited in Missoum, forthcoming).

**b. Lack of ESP Materials:** According to some studies, university departments did not provide ESP teachers with teaching materials. Thus, they depend only on their efforts to prepare or find and adapt materials related to the learners’ content specialty with which they are not familiar. Besides, most EFL teachers are not trained in syllabus and materials design.

**c. ESP Teachers’ Lack of Teaching Experience:** Teachers who teach ESP are usually newly graduated (Assassi, 2020).

## **1.2. Factors Making ESP Teacher’s Mission Impossible**

The above challenges, especially the design of an ESP syllabus and materials become more challenging to Algerian ESP teachers due to a number of factors. The latter are briefly reviewed in the following sections. According to Missoum (forthcoming), in all the Algerian university contexts investigated by fifty-five studies, ESP teachers worked under the following conditions:

**a. Difficult Work Conditions:** Several conditions have been documents that could undermine ESP teachers’ work. For instance, as Afia & Mami concluded, “time allocation of English lectures was not motivating, the reason why their [students’] attendance decreased progressively” (2020:6). Assassi also found out “lack of preparation for courses and the constant change and late assignment of ESP teachers” (2020: 450).

**b. Lack of Job Security and Decent Remuneration:** The majority of ESP teachers in Algerian university departments are novice underpaid part-time teachers

**c. Universities Do Not Provide EFL-ESP Teachers With Training in ESP Pedagogy:** Research on the ESP situation in Algeria unanimously declares the failure of institutions to provide training for teachers in ESP teaching. It is hard to expect much success of ESP modules in Algerian English departments as “Most teachers ... had no previous experience ... not even have adequate knowledge ... which could have helped them design and implement an ESP Course” (Khaldi, 1990:99). Khaldi found out that in Algiers University, the English Department provided no teacher training for graduates in ESP pedagogy (1990:99). Eventually, some teachers confessed their lack of readiness to teach ESP (Belhouchet, 2015: 27).

**d. Low Learners’ English Proficiency** makes ESP teachers struggle to develop a good functional communicative competence in learners. For instance, Benyelles concluded her study by conceding, “Despite this world status, and the relatively long exposure (10 years) to the English language, postgraduate students in the scientific and technological fields are still unable to extract information from documents claiming that their language knowledge is poor.” (2013: 244)

**e. Very Heterogeneous Groups of Learners**

**f. Very Large ESP classes**

**g. Low Value Allotted to ESP Courses by Curricula and Institutions** reflected in bad time allocation and low credit.

**h. Low Student Motivation for Studying ESP Courses:** Despite their awareness of its academic and professional importance and due to the above factors research revealed an issue of low student motivation in ESP courses.

Due to the challenges, especially those listed above, Missoum concludes his met-analysis of fifty-five studies on ESP in Algeria as follows: “The missions assigned to ESP teachers are so challenging that they tend to

become impossible to accomplish... hence the negative impact on ESP teachers' motivation to teach, self-efficacy and well-being. Thus, teachers keep quitting ESP positions... The evidence for this conclusion is the established fact, according to the studies analysed in this research, that ESP teachers are mostly novice teachers. They simply fail to stay long enough to become experienced teachers" (forthcoming, p. 8).

The situation described above calls for a quest for solutions to the different challenges. In this research, the focus is laid on what could be considered the priority one challenge; namely, the syllabus or defining what to teach. Proposed solutions must make the currently quasi-impossible mission more feasible for the mostly EFL-trained teachers recruited to teach ESP.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Context**

This study was carried out in the petroleum sector in the Wilaya (Province) of Ouargla in Southern Algeria. As a teacher in charge of teaching English to professionals from different fields related to the petroleum industry, I became aware of the challenge facing ESP teachers in professional contexts. The daunting and urgent question was "What should I teach considering that the learners come from a wide range of professions (administrative clerks, managers, accountants, well-engineers, mechanical engineers, architects, medical personnel, etc.)? The employers of these teachers (private language schools) provided them with textbooks of either General English or Business English. Then, as an educational manager working with one of these language schools, I took up the task of looking for strategies to deal with the syllabus issue affecting all the teachers and learners. In this effort, I undertook needs analysis to find out if a common core set of learning objectives that our teachers, with exclusively EFL training, can teach successfully to help learners with communication for professional purposes.

#### **3.2. Participants**

The population investigated by the present study consists of professionals or employees with various degrees of managerial responsibilities and

educational background (many held university degrees and some with pre-university education). ESP teachers (08) were also included as participants in order to obtain their perspective on learners' ESP needs. The other forty (40) participants did a myriad of jobs (administrative clerks, managers, accountants, well engineers, mechanical engineers, architects, etc.). Ten (10) participants did oil-industry jobs (01 reservoir engineer and 09 well services technicians); three (03) had medical jobs (02 medics + 01 HSE (Health Safety and Environment)). Ten (10) participants worked administrative jobs (including 02 managers). From finance, there were seven (07), and nine (09) participants had technical jobs (Telecommunication technicians (03), civil engineering (01), mechanic (01), and two (02) chemical laboratory technicians. Finally, two (02) participants did not specify their job. The participants worked in three work sites: Ourhoud, Hassi Messaoud, and Ouargla City; all three sites are located in the Province of Ouargla, Algeria. They worked for four (4) employers: ENSP (Entreprise Nationale de Services aux Puits or National Company for Oil Well Services), GB (Groupement Berkine, Ouargla, Algeria), BASP (Baroid Algeria Oil Well Services) and LCs (Language Centres). The questionnaires were sent by email or submitted to employees via their teacher of English. Randomisation of the sample of participants was determined by their willingness to participate in the study.

### **3.3. Research Instrument – An ESP Needs Analysis Questionnaire**

A needs analysis questionnaire was designed in order to address learners (employees) and managers (in French or English to ensure better access and more participation) as well as ESP teachers (See the questionnaire in Table One below). The purpose was to collect data about the needs of employees in terms of English for professional purposes. Ultimately, the findings were hoped to inform ESP courses so as to focus better on the needs of the learners while making the teaching more feasible to EFL-ESP teachers. The participants were invited to tick the ESP skills that they considered very useful in their work environment. The skills were collected from several textbooks used in the area of teaching English for professionals (*Market Leader*, *English for Business Communication*, etc.).

### **3.4. Data Treatment**

The questionnaire data were entered in a Microsoft Excel sheet for amalgamation and analysis to try to answer the research question. They were collated by job, company and work site to verify what the important ESP needs are and how similar they are across cohorts. Collation consisted of tallying the percentage of respondents who selected each skill as essential for the workplace (see Table One below for the results).

For ease of the tabular presentation of the data, the following **abbreviations** are used:

**Jobs:** Petro = Oil-industry jobs; Med = Medical jobs; Adm = administrative jobs; Fin = Finances and Contracts; Tech = Technical jobs (Telecommunication technicians + Civil Engineering + Mechanic + Chemical Laboratory technicians); EFSPT = EFL-ESP Teachers

**Work site:** ORD = Ourhoud, Ouargla, Algeria; HMD = Hassi Messaoud, Ouargla, Algeria and ORGL = Ouargla, Algeria

**Employers:** ENSP (Entreprise Nationale de Sevices aux Puits or National Company for Oil Well Services), GB (Groupement Berkine, Ouargla, Algeria), BASP (Baroid Algeria Oil Well Services) and LCs (Language Centres)

### **3.5 Results and Discussion**

Table One below helps show how important for work each skill listed in the questionnaire is according to the participants. For each skill, the percentages for each of all the thirteen (13) cohorts of participants (by job type, work place or employer) are set face to face in order to allow comparison between them.

**Table One: Percentage of Participants Who Selected Each Skill as Essential  
for the Workplace by Cohort (Part 1 of 2)**

|    | Cohorts ►                                           | Total     | by worksite |              |             | By Employer |           |           |           | By Job    |           |           |           |           |           |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|    | Target Professional Skills ▼                        | %         | H<br>M<br>D | O<br>R<br>GL | O<br>R<br>D | BASP        | G<br>B    | ENSP      | LCs       | Petro     | Med       | Admin     | Tech      | Fin       | EFSP      |
|    | <b>Average Response for the 47 Skills by Cohort</b> | <b>66</b> | <b>63</b>   | <b>72</b>    | <b>70</b>   | <b>67</b>   | <b>59</b> | <b>70</b> | <b>72</b> | <b>66</b> | <b>59</b> | <b>69</b> | <b>63</b> | <b>61</b> | <b>72</b> |
| 1  | Greet visitors; introduce themselves                | 77        | 72          | 86           | 80          | 87          | 57        | 80        | 88        | 60        | 100       | 80        | 78        | 71        | 88        |
| 2  | Inviting, declining and accepting invitations       | 65        | 55          | 86           | 70          | 60          | 50        | 70        | 88        | 50        | 100       | 70        | 33        | 71        | 88        |
| 3  | Conclude a conversation                             | 90        | 83          | 100          | 100         | 80          | 86        | 100       | 100       | 90        | 100       | 100       | 67        | 86        | 100       |
| 4  | Talking about one's job and workplace               | 73        | 66          | 71           | 90          | 67          | 64        | 90        | 75        | 90        | 100       | 70        | 78        | 29        | 75        |
| 5  | Asking and giving info                              | 92        | 90          | 86           | 100         | 87          | 93        | 100       | 88        | 90        | 100       | 80        | 100       | 100       | 88        |
| 6  | Taking and leaving messages on the phone            | 73        | 69          | 71           | 90          | 67          | 71        | 90        | 75        | 70        | 75        | 80        | 56        | 86        | 75        |
| 7  | Making arrangements                                 | 65        | 66          | 57           | 70          | 47          | 86        | 70        | 63        | 70        | 75        | 50        | 78        | 57        | 63        |
| 8  | Deliver a presentation                              | 67        | 62          | 71           | 80          | 60          | 64        | 80        | 75        | 80        | 50        | 60        | 78        | 43        | 75        |
| 9  | Describe tables, graphs                             | 65        | 66          | 71           | 60          | 67          | 64        | 60        | 63        | 70        | 75        | 70        | 67        | 43        | 63        |
| 10 | Describe one's company                              | 60        | 52          | 86           | 70          | 67          | 36        | 70        | 75        | 60        | 75        | 70        | 33        | 57        | 75        |
| 11 | Asking for and giving clarifications                | 75        | 69          | 86           | 90          | 73          | 64        | 90        | 88        | 90        | 50        | 70        | 56        | 86        | 88        |
| 12 | Describing processes                                | 52        | 41          | 71           | 60          | 47          | 36        | 60        | 75        | 60        | 50        | 40        | 56        | 29        | 75        |
| 13 | Reading and writing business letters                | 83        | 86          | 86           | 70          | 87          | 86        | 70        | 88        | 70        | 75        | 90        | 89        | 86        | 88        |
| 14 | Reading and writing e-mails and faxes               | 85        | 90          | 86           | 80          | 80          | 100       | 80        | 88        | 80        | 50        | 90        | 89        | 100       | 88        |
| 15 | Writing reports                                     | 90        | 86          | 100          | 90          | 93          | 79        | 90        | 100       | 90        | 100       | 90        | 100       | 57        | 100       |
| 16 | Ask for/express opinion                             | 83        | 86          | 86           | 70          | 80          | 93        | 70        | 88        | 70        | 75        | 80        | 100       | 86        | 88        |
| 17 | Urging and explaining what needs to be done         | 85        | 86          | 86           | 80          | 87          | 86        | 80        | 88        | 90        | 75        | 90        | 89        | 71        | 88        |
| 18 | Talking about hypothetical situations               | 46        | 34          | 71           | 60          | 33          | 36        | 60        | 75        | 50        | 50        | 30        | 44        | 29        | 75        |
| 19 | Express preferences                                 | 67        | 66          | 71           | 80          | 67          | 64        | 80        | 63        | 70        | 50        | 70        | 78        | 57        | 63        |
| 20 | Ask for and give advice & suggestions               | 88        | 90          | 86           | 80          | 93          | 86        | 80        | 88        | 90        | 75        | 90        | 100       | 71        | 88        |
| 21 | Talking about rules / obligation                    | 79        | 83          | 100          | 60          | 93          | 71        | 60        | 100       | 60        | 50        | 90        | 89        | 71        | 100       |
| 22 | Chairing a meeting                                  | 63        | 62          | 71           | 60          | 53          | 71        | 60        | 63        | 50        | 50        | 70        | 78        | 57        | 63        |
| 23 | Talking about future plans                          | 71        | 66          | 100          | 60          | 67          | 64        | 60        | 100       | 50        | 75        | 70        | 89        | 43        | 100       |

**Table One: Percentage of Participants Who Selected Each Skill as Essential for the Workplace by Cohort (Part 2 of 2)**

|    | <b>Cohorts ►</b>                            | <b>Tot<br/>al</b> | <b>by worksite</b>   |                       |                      | <b>By Employer</b> |           |             |            | <b>By Job</b> |            |              |             |            |             |
|----|---------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|-------------|------------|---------------|------------|--------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
|    | <b>Target Professional<br/>Skills ▼</b>     | <b>%</b>          | <b>H<br/>M<br/>D</b> | <b>O<br/>R<br/>GL</b> | <b>O<br/>R<br/>D</b> | <b>BASP</b>        | <b>GB</b> | <b>ENSP</b> | <b>LCs</b> | <b>Petro</b>  | <b>Med</b> | <b>Admin</b> | <b>Tech</b> | <b>Fin</b> | <b>ESPT</b> |
| 24 | Ask and answer job interview questions      | <b>67</b>         | 66                   | 71                    | 70                   | 67                 | 64        | 70          | 75         | 70            | 50         | 80           | 67          | 43         | 75          |
| 25 | Describing job                              | <b>67</b>         | 66                   | 57                    | 80                   | 73                 | 57        | 80          | 50         | 80            | 75         | 70           | 78          | 43         | 50          |
| 26 | Talking about professional carriers         | <b>54</b>         | 48                   | 57                    | 70                   | 60                 | 36        | 70          | 50         | 60            | 50         | 60           | 67          | 29         | 50          |
| 27 | Making propositions                         | <b>65</b>         | 62                   | 71                    | 70                   | 67                 | 57        | 70          | 75         | 60            | 25         | 70           | 67          | 71         | 75          |
| 28 | Permission and obligation                   | <b>54</b>         | 48                   | 71                    | 60                   | 47                 | 50        | 60          | 63         | 50            | 50         | 70           | 22          | 71         | 63          |
| 29 | Make, accept or turn down offers & requests | <b>69</b>         | 69                   | 57                    | 70                   | 60                 | 79        | 70          | 63         | 70            | 50         | 80           | 56          | 86         | 63          |
| 30 | Interrupt & clarify                         | <b>73</b>         | 72                   | 86                    | 70                   | 73                 | 71        | 70          | 88         | 80            | 25         | 90           | 56          | 71         | 88          |
| 31 | Accept and reject                           | <b>60</b>         | 55                   | 71                    | 70                   | 67                 | 43        | 70          | 75         | 70            | 0          | 80           | 33          | 71         | 75          |
| 32 | English for computers                       | <b>69</b>         | 66                   | 57                    | 100                  | 73                 | 57        | 100         | 50         | 90            | 50         | 80           | 67          | 57         | 50          |
| 33 | Talking about economy                       | <b>44</b>         | 38                   | 43                    | 50                   | 40                 | 36        | 50          | 50         | 40            | 50         | 40           | 33          | 57         | 50          |
| 34 | English for finance                         | <b>42</b>         | 38                   | 43                    | 50                   | 47                 | 29        | 50          | 50         | 40            | 0          | 40           | 33          | 71         | 50          |
| 35 | Cultural awareness                          | <b>50</b>         | 45                   | 57                    | 60                   | 60                 | 29        | 60          | 63         | 60            | 25         | 60           | 33          | 43         | 63          |
| 36 | Comprehend and respond to ads               | <b>38</b>         | 28                   | 57                    | 60                   | 47                 | 7         | 60          | 50         | 50            | 0          | 70           | 22          | 0          | 50          |
| 37 | HSE English                                 | <b>65</b>         | 55                   | 57                    | 100                  | 87                 | 21        | 100         | 50         | 90            | 100        | 80           | 44          | 29         | 50          |
| 38 | Business law                                | <b>40</b>         | 34                   | 57                    | 40                   | 40                 | 29        | 40          | 50         | 30            | 25         | 50           | 33          | 43         | 50          |
| 39 | Evaluate and compare                        | <b>65</b>         | 62                   | 43                    | 80                   | 67                 | 57        | 80          | 50         | 90            | 75         | 60           | 56          | 57         | 50          |
| 40 | Buy and sell                                | <b>38</b>         | 38                   | 57                    | 30                   | 40                 | 36        | 30          | 50         | 30            | 25         | 40           | 33          | 43         | 50          |
| 41 | Oral communication                          | <b>92</b>         | 93                   | 100                   | 80                   | 87                 | 100       | 80          | 100        | 90            | 100        | 80           | 89          | 100        | 100         |
| 42 | Pronunciation                               | <b>67</b>         | 66                   | 57                    | 80                   | 67                 | 64        | 80          | 63         | 80            | 25         | 80           | 33          | 100        | 63          |
| 43 | Grammar                                     | <b>54</b>         | 52                   | 86                    | 40                   | 67                 | 36        | 40          | 88         | 30            | 50         | 40           | 67          | 57         | 88          |
| 44 | Vocabulary                                  | <b>54</b>         | 52                   | 57                    | 60                   | 67                 | 36        | 60          | 63         | 50            | 50         | 60           | 44          | 57         | 63          |
| 45 | Listening                                   | <b>75</b>         | 72                   | 71                    | 80                   | 73                 | 71        | 80          | 75         | 70            | 100        | 70           | 67          | 86         | 75          |
| 46 | Writing                                     | <b>63</b>         | 69                   | 71                    | 30                   | 87                 | 50        | 30          | 75         | 30            | 75         | 60           | 78          | 71         | 75          |
| 47 | Reading                                     | <b>46</b>         | 55                   | 43                    | 20                   | 67                 | 43        | 20          | 50         | 20            | 25         | 50           | 78          | 43         | 50          |

In order to compare further the responses of the different cohorts to each other, correlation was calculated by work place (Table Two below), by employer (Table Three) and by job type (Table Four).

**Table Two: Correlation between the ESP Needs Expressed by Participants from Different Work Sites**

|     |      |      |
|-----|------|------|
| ORD | HMD  | 0,54 |
| ORD | ORGL | 0,33 |
| HMD | ORGL | 0,65 |

**Table Three: Correlation between the ESP Needs Expressed by Participants Working for Different Employers**

|      |      |      |
|------|------|------|
| BASP | GB   | 0,58 |
| BASP | ENSP | 0,48 |
| BASP | LCs  | 0,60 |
| GB   | ENSP | 0,48 |
| GB   | LCs  | 0,62 |
| ENSP | LCs  | 0,31 |

**Table Four: Correlation between the ESP Needs Expressed by Participants Doing Different Jobs**

|       |       |      |       |      |      |      |      |      |
|-------|-------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Petro | Med   | 0,46 | Med   | Tech | 0,52 | Tech | Fin  | 0,29 |
| Petro | Admin | 0,68 | Med   | Fin  | 0,24 | Tech | ESPT | 0,55 |
| Petro | Tech  | 0,40 | Med   | ESPT | 0,46 | Fin  | ESPT | 0,49 |
| Petro | Fin   | 0,31 | Admin | Tech | 0,43 |      |      |      |
| Petro | ESPT  | 0,33 | Admin | Fin  | 0,49 |      |      |      |
| Med   | Admin | 0,37 | Admin | ESPT | 0,52 |      |      |      |

These results may be treated with reasonable trust considering that the informants are probably among the best in the Algerian context to inform research on the needs in ESP for professional purposes. Two reasons can be advanced in support of this claim:

1. They have spent many years in their jobs, using English for work; and
2. They have spent many years in contexts that are among the richest in English use in Algeria as they worked with many native speakers.

From the analysis of the data collected in this study, a few findings emerge as follows. The majority of the participants (66 %) reported that, overall, the skills listed in the questionnaire are *very useful* for work. The skills that received the **lowest** approval rates are ‘Buy and sell’ (38 %), ‘comprehend and respond to ads’ (38 %), ‘business law’ (40 %), ‘English for banking and finance’ (42 %), ‘reading’ (46 %), and ‘talking about hypothetical

situations' (46 %). Most of these skills belong to areas not directly related to most of the participants' professional interests, as they are involved in the petroleum sector. The ESP skills that received the **highest** approval rates are reading and writing business letters (83 %), asking for / expressing opinions (83 %), urging and explaining what needs to be done (85 %), reading and writing e-mails and faxes (85 %), asking for and giving advice and suggestions (88 %), concluding a conversation (90 %), writing reports and memos (90 %), asking for and giving info (92 %), and oral communication (92 %). It is notable that oral communication skills received the highest approval rate from the participants (92 %). Other studies found that the most important language skills for the work place are speaking and listening (Benzerdjeb, 2021; Hamdani & Ouahmiche, 2022). This suggests that for ESP courses, the focus should be on developing listening and speaking. In addition, reading, which was considered very useful for work only by 46 % of the respondents, obtained a much higher approval when linked to specific work-related tasks; i.e. reading business letters, e-mails and faxes. This suggests that the widely known and often classroom-targeted language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary and grammar) are considered very useful for work when they serve job-related functions.

Nearly all the skills listed in the questionnaire (40 of 47) were considered very useful for work by at least 50% of the participants. All the thirteen (13) cohorts of participants (by job type, work place or employer) expressed high average approval rates; i.e. between 59 % and 72 % of every cohort reported that the skills in the questionnaire are very interesting for work. Moreover, as shown in Tables Two, Three and Four above, a good to high positive correlation emerged between every pair of cohorts, ranging for the lowest +0.24 to the highest +0.68 in the possible range of – 1 to +1. These positive and high correlation values suggest that the participants' beliefs about ESP needs are quite similar across work site, job types / profession / field of expertise and employers / companies. This is an encouraging finding in the light of the substantiated challenge ESP teachers face about the contents to teach to learners from different professional fields.

Indeed, the skills used in the present ESP needs analysis, especially those with high approval rates, are directly and clearly related to communication that learners seem to need regardless of their field of expertise and work. *The data seem to suggest that 1) ESP communication skills that are common to any professional field were identified by the participants as very useful for work environments; 2) the selection of ESP skills is quite similar between all the different cohorts; i.e. communicative skills are considered very useful for work purposes in any job and work place surveyed.* This empirical finding is consistent with the findings of other studies in the Algerian context. The data collected by many studies indicate a need for communication skills rather than only or primarily specialist vocabulary. The participants in seventeen (17) studies expressed the need to prioritise the teaching/learning of communication language skills; i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing (e.g. Bounadja, 2022; Hadj Djelloul, 2021; Izidi and Zitouni, 2017). For example, according to Kherrous & Belmekki, bank employees reported need for English for undertaking “answering international calls, writing business reports, business letters, and sometimes attending meeting and conferences... to communicate effectively in the world of work” (2021: 12). Actually, “the majority of the students assert their weakness in speaking and listening skills and they have the perception that speaking and listening skills, and communication in general should be given priority when designing an ESP course” (Ghedeir and Nesba, 2017: 25; also Arabi and Benaicha, 2019; Benzerdjeb, 2021; Bouguenous, 2019; Mekkaoui and Mouhadjer, 2019). Moreover, many students highlighted difficulty in writing and presenting projects (Hamdani & Ouahmiche, 2022: 678). These consistent findings may encourage strategies that could make the job of EFL-ESP teachers more feasible. I will propose a number of suggestions to this effect under implications below.

### **3.6. Implications / Suggestions**

The present research explores a solution to the most critical challenge; i.e. the failure of university departments to provide ESP teachers with appropriate syllabus and materials. The absence of the latter leaves the mostly inexperienced and untrained teachers to struggle on their own

without any kind of support; which naturally leads to poor teaching and learning. Indeed, as noted in one study, “English courses provided to the engineers during their undergraduate education were not directly related to effective communication skills for the workplace” (Bounadja, 2022: 24). Another study reported, “In respect to the employees’ lacks, the majority stated that they were weak in English communicative skills” (Hadj Djelloul, 2021: 531). Algerian Higher education must tackle this challenge immediately.

### **3.6.1 Setting Academic & Professional Communicative Skills as the Main Goal for ESP Courses**

Almost everyone involved in the corpus of studies analysed in this research seems to believe that ESP teachers must be ready to teach English relevant to the specific field of the learners who can come from any university departments (mechanics, electronics, medicine, finance, law, etc.). ESP teachers are even sometimes expected to teach the learners about their field in English. As shown under sections 2 and 3 above, the conception that an ESP course ***should focus*** on specialist/technical vocabulary may actually be unrealistic. In addition, almost exclusively, ESP teachers have been trained in English language. How can they be expected to teach concepts, as terms represent concepts related to fields of human knowledge like mechanics, medicine, aeronautics, economics, or any other field? They would then have to struggle with both unfamiliar language and unfamiliar content. In addition, learners who have clear and immediate needs to fulfil in English, as Khaldi rightly observed, “feel reluctant to study Shakespeare, the characteristics of a narrative text, or how a typical English family lives” (1990:96).

The data collected by many studies point out to a possible reasonable solution; they indicate a need for communication skills rather than only or primarily specialist vocabulary. In the light of the findings of the present research discussed above, I support the many studies that recommended that ESP courses should be oriented towards developing communicative skills (Arabi and Benaicha, 2019; Belabdelouahab-Fernini, 2021; Cherchab,

2012; Kherrous & Belmekki, 2021; Mebitil, 2012; Segueni, 2012) in order to help learners “perform better in the classroom and at the workplace” (Arabi and Benaicha, 2019: 563). The participants in many studies (18) expressed the need to prioritise the teaching and learning of communication language skills. Actually, “the majority of the students ...have the perception that speaking and listening skills, and communication in general should be given priority when designing an ESP course” (Ghedeir and Nesba, 2017: 25; also Adli et al., 2019; Afia & Mami, 2020; Arabi and Benaicha, 2019; Belabdelouahab-Fernini, 2021; Boubekeur and Benyelles, 2016; Bouguenous, 2019; Bounadja, 2022; Cherchab, 2012; Hadj Djelloul, 2019; Izidi and Zitouni, 2017; Kherrous & Belmekki, 2021; Lamri, 2011; Mebitil, 2012; Mekkaoui and Mouhadjer, 2019; Ould-Si-Bouziane, 2020; Outemzabet, 2020; Segueni, 2012). The main motives for students to study ESP are that it will be useful for communication with specialists from other countries and access to materials related to their specialty (Izidi and Zitouni, 2017: 24). To borrow Widdowsons terms, “teaching English as a medium for science and technology must involve us in the teaching of how scientists and technologists use the system to communicate” (1979:25, as cited in Segueni, 2012:31). For instance, according to Kherrous & Belmekki, bank employees reported need for English for “answering international calls, writing business reports, business letters, and sometimes attending meeting and conferences... to communicate effectively in the world of work” (2021: 12). Thus, a middle ground position in formulating goals for ESP courses would combine work on specialist discourse (vocabulary, structures, etc.) with general communication skills (like making an oral presentation).

It is probably good news for EFL-ESP teachers to realise that many learners are aware that their English language needs are much more related to academic and professional communication. The primary data collected in this research seem to confirm this and suggest that 1) communication skills that are common to **various** professional fields were identified by the participants as very useful for work environments; 2) the selection of ESP skills is quite similar between all the different cohorts; i.e. communicative skills are considered very useful for work purposes in any of the jobs and

work places surveyed. To borrow Khaldi's terms, "An emerging line of research ... was a consideration of the purposes for which language is used" (1990:94). The communicative approach would then be an appropriate approach to ESP.

Besides, providing students with communicative tasks concretely related to their real current and future needs will engage students more (Arabi and Benaicha, 2019: 568). Indeed, ESP teachers "should adopt suitable authentic materials that relate to the students' field of study" (Arabi and Benaicha, 2019: 568; Benabdallah, 2019). They should put learners in real life situations (Cherchab, 2012; Benabdallah, 2019) using authentic tasks similar to what learners will typically do with language. Authentic materials should not include too specialised complex concepts that teachers and learners will not be able to understand. Teachers are there to help learners realise how language works to convey those concepts.

ESP teacher training provides another argument against focusing on specialised language. Khaldi pointed out that, in the departments of English, the ESP module, which is often the only ESP teacher training available, faces a formidable challenge; "we do not know in advance what kind of institution ... these students will be sent to, and thus, making a precise Needs Analysis difficult to establish" (1990:100). This is a key argument for ESP teacher training that does not focus on the vocabulary and structures of a register specific to a single given field of study / profession. Focusing ESP teacher training on common academic and occupational language skills and functions would prepare them to teach in many academic or professional contexts with a little adjustment.

### **3.6.2 A Suggested Common Core English for Academic and Professional Communication**

The mission of the ESP teacher may be made more feasible if they teach common-core academic / professional communicative skills. Khaldi rightly observed that "Students involved in an ESP course study English not for the sake of the English language as such, but primarily because ... they need to further their education (EAP) or because they need English in order to carry

out their jobs (EOP)” (1990:96). Indeed, a realistic goal for EFL teachers recruited for ESP positions is to expect them to teach English for academic and professional communication like the skills included in the needs analysis questionnaire used in the present study (Table One above). ESP teachers may adapt this outline, especially in terms of prioritising the skills, to the specific needs of the learners they are going to teach using a simple needs analysis procedure as the one illustrated in the present study (See sections 2 and 3 above). ESP teachers would be made more successful when the syllabus is focused (not limited) on the skills and vocabulary necessary for all academic and professional contexts (like introducing oneself, making a phone call, giving an academic / professional presentation, writing an email, etc.). This is a much more familiar territory to most EFL-ESP teachers in comparison to using teaching materials that are heavily loaded with unfamiliar and complex specialised concepts.

Equipped with arguments from research like the present study, experienced or novice EFL-ESP teachers can explicitly convince managers and learners, or implicitly through the above quick communication-based needs analysis, that academic and professional communication skills in English are what students need most and what they can achieve successfully, not teaching contents like mechanics, electronics, medicine, etc.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Research has substantiated several challenges that ESP teachers have been facing in Algerian universities. The most recurrent of these challenges are lack of appropriate ESP syllabi and teaching/learning materials. Besides, most EFL teachers are not trained in syllabus and materials design. These challenges are exacerbated by a number of factors such as difficult work conditions and lack of teacher training in ESP pedagogy. These factors lead to low teacher motivation to teach and low student motivation for studying. Consequently, the ESP teachers’ mission becomes so challenging that they keep quitting their positions. This research focuses on the critical challenge of designing ESP syllabi. To achieve this purpose, the researcher conducted analysis of the ESP needs of employees in the petroleum sector in Algeria. The population consists of forty (40) employees who had various jobs.

They worked in three (03) work sites for four (4) employers. A needs analysis questionnaire was designed by the researcher to identify the ESP functions that the participants considered very useful in their work environment. The data were collated by job, company and work site to verify what the important ESP needs are and how similar or different they are across the cohorts.

From the analysis of the data, a few findings emerged. All the thirteen (13) cohorts of participants (by job type, work place and employer) reported that the language functions in the questionnaire are *very interesting* for work. Moreover, high positive correlation emerged between every pair of cohorts (from +0.24 to +0.68), which indicates that the participants' beliefs about ESP needs are quite similar across work site, job and employers. The data clearly suggest that 1) ESP communication skills are very useful for work environments; and that 2) they are very useful potentially in any job and work place. Many other Algerian studies corroborate this empirical finding by prioritising communication skills in ESP courses.

The present research proposes a solution to the critical challenge of designing appropriate syllabi. Its findings indicate that ESP teachers' mission, especially those with EFL training only, can become more feasible by adopting a syllabus based on communicative skills. If the ESP syllabus is focused on the communicative skills that are essential for learners' academic and professional careers, learners will find the course useful and hence learn with better motivation and EFL-ESP teachers will find it easier to teach in different university departments (academic contexts) or companies (professional contexts). Adjustment of syllabi to the needs of learners in different contexts is possible. It should be guided by a simple needs analysis like the one proposed in the present paper. ESP syllabi could combine work on specialist discourse (vocabulary, structures, etc.) with general communication skills (like making an oral presentation). In addition, these courses should use tasks similar to what learners will typically do with English using authentic materials that do not include too specialised complex concepts. In addition, ESP teacher training would

become more feasible if it is based on common academic and occupational language functions like the ones in the questionnaire used in the present study. ESP teachers may experience more success if the syllabus is focused on the more familiar territory of teaching skills like introducing oneself, making a phone call, giving an academic / professional presentation, hence allowing both learners and teachers to experience success and satisfaction in ESP courses.

## 5. Bibliography List:

1. Adli, Fatima Zohra ; Sarnou, Hanane & Hamerlain, Leila (2019) "The teachers' Needs for Medical English in the Faculty of Medicine at Abdelhamid Ibn-Badis University", *International Journal of Psycho-Educational Sciences*, 8(1), pp 34-41
2. Afia, Amel & Naouel Mami Abdellatif (2020) "An ESP Course Design for Postgraduate Students of Engineering at Badji Mokhtar Annaba University in Algeria", *International Journal of English Language Teaching - EA Journals UK*, 8(01), pp 1-10
3. Arabi, Melouka, and Khedidja Benaicha (2019) "The English Communication Needs Of Computer Science Students, Case Study: Second Year Students, Computer Science Department, University Of Chlef", *جسور المعرفة*, 5 (1), pp 563-568
4. Assassi, Tarek (2020) "The Status of ESP in Algeria: The Need for Highly Specialized Courses of English." *Humanization Journal for Researches and Studies*, 11 (20), pp 439-455
5. Belabdelouahab-Fernini, Linda (2021) "Assessing an ESP Course at the Computer Science Department: The Case study of the University of M'Sila, Algeria", *El Omda in Linguistics and Discourse Analysis*, 05 (02), pp 434-447
6. Belhouchet, Fatma Zohra (2015) "Teaching and Learning Specific English Language at ENS-Bouzaréah.", *Langues, Communication Et Nouvelle Technologie*, 3 (3), pp 20-30
7. Benabdallah, Nacereddine (2019) "Rethinking ESP in Algerian Universities: Towards an Adaptable Materials-Design Framework", *American International Journal of Social Science*, 8 (1), pp 33- 37

8. Benyelles, Radia (2013) "Teaching Common Core English in ESP Classes: a way to promote translation as a learning tool", *Cahiers de Linguistique et Didactique*, 5 (1), pp 244 – 262
9. Benzerdjeb, Soraya (2021) "Meeting business students' English language needs in the Algerian tertiary education", *Global Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*. 11(2), pp 124-139
10. Boubekour, Lahcen and Radia Benyelles (2016) "Designing an ESP Course for Engineers in Samsung Engineering Work Site in Timimoun", *Traduction et Langues*, 15 (01), pp 51-69
11. Bouguenous, Abdellah (2019) *The Need for Teaching Effective ESP Courses for Medical Students in Algeria: The University of Sidi Bel-Abbès as a Case Study*. PhD Diss., University of Belabbes, Algeria
12. Bounadja, Azzeddine (2022) "ESP for Engineers: A Subsequent Workplace Learning Facilitator", *Academic Review Of Social And Human Studies*, 14 (1), pp. 16 – 25
13. Cherchab, Farida (2012) *Authentic Materials in ESP: An Evaluation Proposal at the Department of Sciences within the LMD System*, PhD Diss., University of Oran
14. Guerid, Fethi (2019) *An ESP Course Design for Finance Managers: The Case of ArcelorMittal Algeria Company*, PhD Diss., Stif 2 University
15. Hadj Djelloul, Khadidja, "English in the Workplace: Language Needs of Bank Employees Bank of Algeria as a Case Study", *Revue EL-Bahith en Sciences Humaines et Sociales*, 13 (02) pp 525-534
16. Hamdani, Isma & Ghania Ouahmiche (2022) "Identifying the English Language Needs of Hydraulics Engineers: Bridging the Gap between ESP Academic Studies and Professional Needs", *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, 9 (2). 677-689
17. Izidi, Redouane, and Mimouna Zitouni (2017) "ESP Needs Analysis: The Case of Mechanical Engineering Students at the University of Sciences and Technology, Oran USTO", *Revue Académique des Études Sociales et Humaines*, 18, pp 16-25
18. Khaldi, Kamel (1990) "Do We Need An ESP Component In The Curriculum Of The Licence?" In Saib, Jilali (ed.) *English Language*

- Teaching In the Maghreb Current Issues in Evaluation*. Proceedings of the XIth National Conference of the Moroccan Association of Teachers of English (MATE). Oujda, December 1990, Rabat: Morocco, pp 91-102
19. Khaldi, Kamel (1995) "The contribution of the ESP teacher to the development of the use of English in Algerian companies. A case study, Sonatrach", *ASP, La Revue du GERAS*, 7 (10), pp 207-216
20. Kherrous, Sarah & Amine Belmekki (2021) "Investigating the need of Algerian Bankers to develop Specialized Business Vocabulary - The Case of Algeria Gulf Bank Employees in Tlemcen," *ESP World*, 23(62), pp 1-14
21. Lamri, Chams-Eddine (2011) *An English Course For Law and Administrative Sciences Students - The Case Of Fourth- Year Students At Abou Bekr Belkaid University – Tlemcen*, Magister Thesis, Department of English, University of Tlemcen
22. Mebitil, Nawal (2012) "Developing an Intercultural Awareness in an ESP Context: A challenge for the Novice ESP Practitioners", *English for Specific Purposes World*, 12 (35), pp 1-10
23. Mekkaoui, Ghania and Nouredine Mouhadjer (2019) "Addressing air traffic controllers' English language proficiency needs: case of Zenata airport", *Global Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 9 (3), pp 167-183
24. Missoum, Maamar (forthcoming) "Challenges Facing ESP Teachers in Algeria - Meta-Analysis", *El-Tawassol*
25. Ould-Si-Bouziane, Sabria (2020) "Towards Teaching English for Medical Purposes at the Intensive Language Teaching Centre of Mostaganem", *Revue Maghrébine de Langues*, 11(1), pp 5-13
26. Outemzabet, Belkacem (2020) "Maritime English Language Needs and Practices in the Port of Bejaia: An Ethnographic Case Study", *Journal of Studies in Language, Culture and Society*, 3(2), pp 112-126
27. Segueni, Lamri (2012) "Teaching the ESP course in the LMD system: Problems and Perspectives", *Revue des Sciences Humaines – Université Mohamed Khider Biskra*, No 25
28. Widdowson, Henry George (1979) *Explorations in Applied Linguistics*, Oxford University Press (as cited in Segueni, 2012:31)