# Teaching ESP at the UFC in Adrar

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**Abstract**

The present article examines the problems faced in teaching ESP at the *UFC,* Centre of Adrar. The French acronym *UFC* which is the abbreviation of l'*Université de la Formation Continue* is translated into "the University of Continuing Education", and sometimes "the University of Continuous Formation", however, in Europe it is known as "the Open University".

The first part of the article deals with the classification of the students into levels according to their educational background, taking into account the criteria put by Penguin Readers in association with the world famous educational publisher, Longman. The second part is devoted to an evaluation of the textbooks provided by this institution for the different disciplines, that is, Educational Psychology, Banking Techniques, Law of Business and International Economic Relations; to check to what extent the contents of these text-books respond to the formation requirements. Finally, a general assessment will be made to check how far the means provided by the *UFC* is suitable to achieve the objectives of teaching ESP at this institution.

ملخص

يتناول المقال مناقشة مشاكل تدريس **الإنجليزية لأهداف معينة** English for Specific Purposes بجامعة التكوين المتواصل بأدرار. إن الحروف المختصرة UFC هي اختصار لجامعة التكوين المتواصل باللغة الفرنسية والتي ليس لها محليا مقابل موحد في اللغة الإنجليزية حيث أحيانا تترجم حرفيا إلى جامعة التكوين المتواصل University of Continuing Education وأحيانا إلى University of Continuous Formation أما في اوروبا فتعرف ب The Open University.

الجزء ألأول من المقال يستعرض المرسوم التنفيذي المتعلق بإنشاء هذه المؤسسة و اهدافها يلي ذلك إحصاء المستويات المختلفة لطلبة أقسام جامعة التكوين المتواصل و ذلك بالنظر إلى خلفياتهم الثقافية و مساراتهم الدراسية .الجزء الثاني يخصص لتقييم برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية لكل مستوى في كل

تخصص أي علم النفس التربوي التقنيات البنكية, قانون الأعمال و قانون العلاقات الاقتصادية الدولية للنظر في مدى استجابة هذه البرامج لمتطلبات كل تخصص. في النهاية نحاول إجراء تقييم شامل يأخذ بعين الاعتبار الوسائل المتاحة (اساتذة مختصين, الحجم الساعي, تسهيلات بيداغوجية أخرى) ومدى ملائمتها لتحقيق الأهداف المرجوة من تدريس ال ESP بهذه المؤسسة.

***Introduction***

The present article examines the problems faced in teaching ESP during the ten year experience at the *UFC* of Adrar. The French acronym *UFC* which is in fact the abbreviation of l'*Université de la Formation Continue* known in Europe as "The Open University", is, in Algeria, sometimes referred to as "The University of Continuous Formation", sometimes as "The University of Continuing Education".

The first section of the article is devoted to the establishment and evolution of the UFC. Section Two gives detailed statistics about the disciplines and the number of students since the UFC Centre of Adrar was created in the academic year 1995-1996. Then, the students are classified into categories according to their levels taking into account the standards agreed by Penguin Readers in association with the famous educational publisher Longman. Section Three is devoted to the definition and evolution of ESP through its five stages.

The last section focuses on teaching English for Specific Purposes at the *UFC* Centre of Adrar. In this section, we try to define the objective of teaching ESP courses at the UFC Centre of Adrar and the means provided to achieve this objective. In this respect, the English text books (contents, lexis and register) and the time allocated are examined to check the extent to which they respond to training requirements. Besides, we attempt to find a solution to the problem of level heterogeneity and then see whether we should teach the learners altogether the same English courses, or to classify them according to their levels and teach each level separately. The latter leads to another question, that is, to what extent it is possible on the ground with regard to the available means? Finally, a general assessment will be made to check how far the means provided by the *UFC* is suitable to achieve the objectives of teaching ESP at this institution.

## I. The Establishment of the University of Continuing Education

The UFC was created by the Executive Decree No. 90-149 of 26 May 1990 establishing the organization and functioning of the University of Continuing Education. Five years later, the Centre of Continuing Education in Adrar opened its doors[585]. The objectives of this institution as stated in the decree are: 1. Giving the opportunity to all citizens fulfilling the required criteria to achieve higher education courses.2. To contribute, with other sectors, in the development of

[585] Journal officiel n° 22, 30 Mai 1990, pp. 635 - 639

continuing training.3. Organising trainings for the benefit of other sectors.

## II. Disciplines and Students

***Table1: Statistics of the UFC students by discipline from: 1995/96 to 2011/12***[586]

| Academic Year | Pre graduation | | | Graduation | | | | | | | Graduated | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Science | H.Sces | Total | Management | Accountancy | Business Law | Inter.Eco. Relations | Psychology | Banking Tech | Teachers | | |
| 1995 – 96 | 222 | 478 | 700 | | | | | | | | | 700 |
| 1996 – 97 | 56 | 173 | 229 | 49 | | 81 | | | | | | 359 |
| 1997 – 98 | 46 | 108 | 154 | 40 | | 100 | | | | | | 294 |
| 1998-1999 | 34 | 150 | 184 | 34 | | 152 | | | | | 90 | 410 |
| 1999-2000 | 66 | 201 | 267 | | | 146 | | | | | 26 | 413 |
| 2000-2001 | 78 | 254 | 332 | | 42 | 166 | | | | | 17 | 540 |
| 2001-2002 | 31 | 101 | 132 | | 36 | 201 | | | | | 26 | 369 |
| 2002-2003 | 21 | 187 | 208 | | 34 | 352 | | | | | 25 | 594 |
| 2003-2004 | 36 | 137 | 173 | | 34 | 461 | 61 | | | | 49 | 729 |
| 2004-2005 | 40 | 136 | 176 | | 16 | 412 | 78 | | | | 16 | 682 |
| 2005-2006 | 34 | 161 | 195 | | | 543 | 100 | | | 74 | 40 | 912 |
| 2006-2007 | 82 | 248 | 330 | | | 291 | 80 | 34 | | 313 | 55 | 1048 |
| 2007-2008 | 109 | 366 | 475 | | | 300 | 51 | 79 | | 461 | 162 | 1366 |
| 2008-2009 | 91 | 507 | 598 | | | 296 | 81 | 115 | | 405 | 83 | 1495 |
| 2009-2010 | 110 | 522 | 632 | | | 376 | 185 | 170 | 124 | 455 | 93 | 1942 |
| 2010-2011 | 109 | 565 | 674 | | | 410 | 218 | 194 | 146 | 445 | 61 | 2087 |
| 2011-2012 | 216 | 461 | 677 | | | 506 | 263 | 271 | 117 | 60 | | 2148 |

[586] Statistics provided by the administration of the UFC centre of Adrar

### 2.1 Disciplines

When the UFC Centre of Adrar opened its doors in the academic year 1995-96, it started with two pre-graduation classes (Science and Letters & Human Sciences) with a total number of students of 700 in both. Only 130 of this number succeeded in the UFC Baccalaureate and enrolled in the first year graduation in the two first disciplines (Business Law and Management) in the academic year 1996-97. The course of Management closed after the graduation of the first promotion. In the academic year 2000-01, Accountancy was introduced as a new discipline but it closed in the academic year 2004-05 after the graduation of two promotions. In the academic year 2003-04 and due to increasing demands for new disciplines, International Economic Relations opened a class with 61 students.

In the academic years 2006-07 and 2009-10, two other disciplines, Educational Psychology and Banking Techniques were introduced, respectively. The UFC Centre of Adrar introduced a new discipline, Public Management in the current year. Besides, since the academic year 2005-06, the UFC Centre of Adrar has been giving courses for teachers of middle schools with a view to award them a professional degree (*Licence professionnelle*) at the end of the three-year programme.

### 2.2 Students

#### a. Pre-graduation

Since it was created in the academic year 1995-1996 the number of students has been increasing, as shown in the table above. Besides, the institution opened classes for pre-graduate students were allowed to continue graduation courses after a year study in case they pass the baccalaureate exam[1] . At present (2011 – 2012) the number of students in pre-graduation and graduation all disciplines included is 1961 distributed as follows[2]:

[1] This baccalaureate is a national exam organised by the UCC, and it usually takes place before the yearly baccalaureate exam organised by the Ministry of Education.

[2] Statistics provided by the administration of the UFC

Table2: Academic year 2011-2012 Pre graduation

| Disciplines | Males | Females | Working Students | Jobless Students | Number of students |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Human Sciences | 217 | 244 | 108 | 353 | 461 |
| Sciences | 135 | 81 | 67 | 149 | 216 |
| Totals | 352 | 325 | 175 | 502 | 677 |

**b. Academic year 2011-2012 Distant courses**

We note that at the first year Banking Technique course the number of students is nil because the number of applicants was not enough to start a class.

Table3: Distant courses for the year 2011-2012

| Disciplines / Levels | Educational Psychology | Business Law | International Economic relations | Banking techniques | Totals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| First year | 127 | 241 | 108 | / * | 476 |
| Second Year | 70 | 138 | 79 | 40 | 327 |
| Third Year | 74 | 127 | 76 | 77 | 354 |
| Graduated | 19 | 122 | 12 | 00 | 153 |
| Totals | 271 | 506 | 263 | 117 | 1157 |

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**c. Academic year 2011-2012[1] Regular courses**

Table4: Public Management

| Discipline | Level | Number |
|---|---|---|
| Public management | First year | 127 |

**2.3 Categories of learners**: Taking into account the standards agreed there are 7 levels for English learning. Both Penguin Readers and Longman have set 7 comprising:

1- Easy-starters
2- Beginners
3- Elementary
4- Pre-intermediate
5- Intermediate
6- Upper-intermediate

[1] This discipline is excluded in this paper because I do not teach its students.

7- Advanced.

The results of the written exams, all disciplines included, but Public Management, show that the students' levels correspond to the following:

60 per cent at level one, 25 per cent at level two, 10 per cent at level 3 and only about 2 per cent at level 4.

Table5: Percentage of each category of learners

| Levels/ Marks | Easy starters (0 to 05)/20 | Beginners (05 to 10)/20 | Elementary (10 to 15)/20 | Pre Intermediate (15 to 20)/20 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Percentages** | **60%** | **25%** | **10%** | **05%** |

As shown in the table above, the easy-starters represent the largest category of learners; most of them have never studied English before, or studied another language (German or Spanish) as a third language at high school. The category of beginners, which sometimes is referred to as that of "false beginners", includes learners who had studied English before starting UFC for a period of time, generally more than ten years. This category comes second in the previous classification with 25 per cent. The third category represents learners who left school recently and still remember some vocabulary and grammatical rules necessary to produce simple sentences. The last category of learners, which represents 5%, concerns learners who left school recently and those who give particular importance to English for a reason or another.

## III. Definition and Evolution of ESP

### A. Definitions

As its name suggests, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an approach to learning English different from the approaches used to learn General English based on developing the four skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking). According to Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters: "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning"[1]. This definition means that the learner's needs determine how the courses should be designed in terms of vocabulary, accuracy and approach. Dudley Evans

[1] Tom Hutchinson & Alan Waters, English for Specific Purposes, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 19

gives more details in classifying the characteristics of ESP into absolute and variable. The former includes[1]:

1. ESP is defined to satisfy particular requirements.
2. It uses the methodology and activities related to the discipline it serves.
3. ESP takes into account the factors necessary for General English and the lexis and register of the discipline it serves.

The variable characteristics includes[2]:

1. ESP is designed for specific disciplines.
2. ESP may use an approach that is different from that of General English.
3. ESP is likely designed for adult learners.
4. ESP learners should have some basic knowledge of language system.

### B. Evolution of ESP

Since it appeared in the late 1960s, the evolution of ESP has known five distinct phases[3]:

a. The concept of special language: it was first introduced by Peter Stevens, Jack Ewer and John Swales, (characterized ESP in its beginnings) and was based on register analysis, that is, focusing on the vocabulary used, for instance, English of, say, Mechanic Engineering requires a specific register different from that of, say, general English.

b. Discourse analysis: relying on register analysis showed deficiencies in terms of the meaning intended. This led Henry Widdowson, Larry Selinker, Louis Trimble, John Lackstrom and Mary Todd-Trimble to move from the sentence level to the level above the sentence.

c. Target situation analysis or *needs analysis:* the term target situation analysis, introduced by Chambers in 1980 describes better the process concerned. In short, this concept aims at establishing procedures that make language analysis closer to the learner's reasons for learning.

d. Skills and strategies approach: it aims at getting the learners to reflect on and analyse how meaning is produced from written or spoken discourse.

e. A learning-centred approach: the previous phases developed so far deal with language use rather than language learning. However, the objective is not the description of the surface forms of language but a

[1] Dudley-Evans, T.,& St. John, M. J. , Developments in ESP: a multi-disciplinary approach, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 4

[2] Dudley-Evans, T.,& St. John, M. J., 1998, op.cit., p.5

[3] Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, op. cit. pp. 9-14

truly valid approach of ESP based on an understanding of the processes of language learning.

### C. ESP at the UFC of Adrar

Due to the importance of English as being[1]:

1. The language of science and technology, business and communication.
2. More than half of the world's technical and scientific periodicals are in English.
3. Three-quarters of the world's mail, telexes and cables are in English.
4. Eighty per cent of all information on the web is stored in English.
5. The classical definition of an illiterate changed from "someone who doesn't know reading and writing" to "someone who doesn't know English and computing".

Aware of these factors, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Algeria introduced ESP and computing in all disciplines at Algerian universities, and the UFC Centre of Adrar is no exception. However, teaching ESP at the UFC Centre of Adrar has its specificity which is the heterogeneous level of students, and this makes the task of designing accurate courses difficult. This necessitates to classify students into categories of learners according to their levels (see Table 5).

### D. Analysis and Evaluation of the English text-books

This analysis and evaluation cover the English text-books provided by this institution for the existing disciplines, that is, Educational Psychology, Business affairs, International Economic Relations, Banking Techniques.

**Educational Psychology:**

ESP is taught in this discipline in the first and second year only throughout the three years of study. The text-book of the first year[2] comprises sixty-six pages, divided into two parts. The first concerns the first term, it includes ten lectures dealing with topics ranging from the definition of psychology, psychological development ( infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood), to the famous psychologists (Jean Piaget and Alfred Adler) in addition to lectures in grammar about word order in simple statements, demonstratives, possessive nouns and plurals in English.

The second part which concerns the second term includes nine lectures devoted to child psychology, social psychology and famous

[1] http://www.framtak.com/english/facts.html, October 18th, 2012

[2] The two text-books (first year and second year) are elaborated by F. Maameri , a senior teacher at the University of Mentouri, Constantine

psychologists. Besides, it deals with some grammatical topics related to the parts of speech such as: articles, pronouns and possessives. In general the lectures dealing with psychology are followed by activities aiming at perfecting the reading and writing skills, in addition to activities of terminology comprehension and translation. On the whole, the contents of this text book are well selected to provide appropriate ESP courses for the students of educational psychology. However, two lectures per term each in a session of an hour and a half is far from being enough to overcome the existing deficiencies among students.

The text- book of the second year which comprises thirty-six pages including ten lectures is broadly similar to that of the first year as far as the contents are concerned. The lectures examine school of thoughts and concepts (philosophical foundations, scientific foundations, twentieth century psychology, developments and current trends and schools of psychology). Each lecture is followed by activities similar to those mentioned above. Besides, a number of grammatical topics are dealt with such as the present simple, the past simple and adjectives. The contents of this text book help to a large extent to provide appropriate ESP courses in psychology.

**As to Banking Techniques:**

In this discipline ESP is taught over the three years of study. The text book of the first year[1]

[1] The text-books of the first and second years are elaborated by A. Zinelabidine, a senior teacher, 2005

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in eight pages suggesting courses using technical terms related to the discipline, in addition to some activities to improve the students' vocabulary. The text book of the second year includes forty-two pages dealing with topics relevant to the discipline such as: economic functions, law of banking, entry regulation, politics and history, Types of banks, Islamic banking, banks in economy, bank crisis, challenges within the banking industry and profitability. The text book of the third year[1] includes twenty pages in which the author suggests texts relevant to the discipline followed by activities working on technical terms and some grammatical rules. A brief analysis to the text books of the three years reveals that in spite of their good contents which can be a good material to teaching ESP, they do not fit the average level of the students.

**Business Law:**

ESP is taught throughout the three years of learning and the text books come in two parts one per term each year. The text book of the first year, for instance, the two parts includes ten pages dealing with topics irrelevant to the discipline such as the description of the human body, the four seasons and the five senses. It also includes activities related to grammatical topics such as plurals, the present simple and the past simple, phonetic transcription and vocabulary. The text book of the second year comes in eight pages devoted to the description of the human body in addition to notes on the past simple, modals and some phonetics. The text-book of the third year[2] extends on eleven pages dealing with health, justice, good and evil. It also includes notes on tenses, vocabulary and phonetics. A brief analysis to the three text books shows the following:

i. The contents of the three text-books are completely irrelevant to the discipline.

ii. The introduction of notes on phonetics is not appropriate for this category of learners.

iii. There are many mistakes related to spelling, for example, "off" instead of "of" on page2, "for" instead of "four" on page3, "Month" instead of "mouth" on page2 second year text book, Part Two. Punctuation is not respected at all over the whole document, words are capitalised when not necessary and not capitalised when it is. Examples: They **S**wim in the summer, on page3; Autumn is the season of **MITS** and

[1] This text-book is written by A. Taxenna, a senior teacher at the Kharrouba Centre of Continuing Training, 2008

[2] The second part of third year text book is written by y. Derradji, a lecturer

Fogs, on page5, "people love tea" instead of "People love tea." on page3, second year textbook, Part One.
The three text-books are by no means appropriate to teach ESP in this discipline.

**International Economic Relations:**

Here again ESP is taught over the three years, two lectures each semester. The text book of the first year[1], Part One comes in nine units dealing with topics such as: 'Countries, Nationalities and Languages', 'Money', 'Shops and Shopping', 'Work : Duties, Conditions and Pay', 'Jobs', 'In the Office and in the Factory', 'Business and Finance', 'Sales and Marketing', each topic followed by activities related to vocabulary. Part Two extends on eight pages where themes relevant to the discipline are developed. The text book of the second year includes courses of grammar (the parts of speech), punctuation and phonetics. The third year text book, part one comprises fifteen pages developing some grammatical topics such as: the parts of speech, reported speech, modal auxiliary verbs and the passive, in addition to some spelling rules. Part Two deals with prepositions and punctuation. After examining the text books in this discipline one can draw the following: with the exception of the first year text book which includes topics relevant to the discipline, the text books of the second and third years are exclusively devoted to grammatical topics, punctuation and spelling rules.

**Evaluation**

The assessment of the different English text books of each field varies from a discipline to another. The text books designed for the Banking Techniques and Educational Psychology, for instance, are carefully elaborated to teach ESP in the two disciplines. However, the allocated time is not enough to achieve satisfactory results. Concerning the text books designed for students of business law, they have absolutely nothing to do with the discipline as far as the content is concerned. Besides, they were not reviewed after being elaborated, which explains the important number of mistakes they include. The text books designed to teach ESP in the discipline of international economic relations are to some extent acceptable on the whole particularly the text book of the first year which deals with themes related to the discipline. Nevertheless, methodologically, it would be better if the text book of the first year was left to the third year, and that of the third year which deals with

[1] The text book is written by Dr S. Boulmerka

grammatical items might be taught in the first year to give students notions about the language system.

***Conclusion***

Teaching ESP at the University of Continuing Education in Adrar faces a number of challenges, the most important ones:

1. The heterogeneous level of students: this factor makes the teaching process difficult, that is, to what kind of audience the courses should be designed. According to the four existing categories of learners, to achieve the objectives of teaching ESP, each category must be taught separately using adequate means such as: suitable courses, text books, number of sessions and all the other facilities that may help in the learning process. However, with regard to the available means, this cannot be on the ground.
2. ESP cannot be taught to the students all levels included, that is, easy starters and beginners for instance, cannot be taught technical terms that serve their discipline, they should have basic knowledge about how language functions, otherwise it is a waste of time. Thus it would be better to teach them basic structures with some vocabulary during the two first years, and leave ESP to the third year.
3. The text-books particularly those conceived for Business Law and International Economic Relations should be reviewed to better serve the disciplines.
4. The time allocated, that is, two sessions of an hour and a half each per semester is not appropriate to achieve good result.
5. The lack of motivation among students is another factor that influences negatively the learning process. The rate of students who attend the meetings doesn't exceed 25 per cent. This lack of motivation and interest can be explained by individual attitudes of the learners, and the value of the reasons they joined the UFC for. In other words, most students see that the graduation will not add significant benefit to their professional career since most of them are working students.
6. Teachers' qualifications are questioned as well in the learning process, that is to achieve good results; specialised ESP teachers in each discipline should be provided. A university teacher specialised in African civilisation or linguistics or any other discipline cannot teach ESP to educational psychology students, for instance.

Under the current conditions and the available means, the objectives of teaching ESP at the UFC of Adrar cannot be achieved.

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