

ESP for Algerian Startup Holders under the Ministerial Decision 1275: Boosting Language Skills for Business Success

Nacera BENALI REGUIEG ¹ *

¹Hassiba Benbouali University of Chlef (Algeria), n.benalireguiieg@univ-chlef.dz

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Abstract:

The paper explores how English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contributes to business success for Algerian startup holders operating within the framework of the Ministerial Decision 1275. It specifically assesses the current English language proficiency of these future entrepreneurs, identifies their specific language needs in business planning, pitching to investors, and networking, and evaluates the effectiveness of ESP courses designed for them. The study involves 37 startup owners from Chlef University, and data was collected through an online questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings reveal significant gaps in English skills, highlighting substantial challenges in business domains. Consequently, the paper recommends the development of ESP programs designed to meet specific needs, enhance access to resources, and improve integration. Proposed initiatives include specialized ESP courses, flexible training formats, and combining language training with entrepreneurial mentoring.

* Nacera BENALI REGUIEG.

Keywords: Algeria; Business Success; English for Specific Purposes (ESP); Entrepreneurship; Language Skills; Ministerial Decision 1275; Startup Holders

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is important for entrepreneurial success in the modern business world. In emerging markets like Algeria, the ability of entrepreneurs to communicate effectively in English makes a difference in their capacity to overcome challenging business interactions, tap investors, and expand globally. This study focuses on Algerian startup holders operating under Ministerial Decision 1275, which provides the framework for supporting and developing new ventures in the country. The Ministerial Decision 1275 encourages entrepreneurship by providing all kinds of support to start-ups. These range from financial incentives to regulatory assistance (Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria, Ministry of Higher Education, 2022). One of the most basic roles that has not been duly explored is the working of the English language to make use of such initiatives. Since English is generally the language associated with international business and investment, better language skills would prove decisive in achieving business success.

The principal aims of this research are: firstly, to identify the English language needs of startup holders; and secondly, to discuss whether ESP programs can be effectively set up at a university and the possible gains for the holders of startups. ESP programs, dealing with language skills relevant to professional contexts, might give targeted support to overcome the specific challenges entrepreneurs face concerning business planning, investor pitching, and networking.

Several questions are being addressed in this research:

1. What is the current level of English demonstrated by the Algerian startup holders, and what impact does it have on the performance of their business?
2. Which aspects of business English do the holders of startups find most challenging?
3. How may an ESP program be well-designed to cover the language needs of those entrepreneurs?
4. Which training methods and support resources are most preferred by these entrepreneurs to attain better effectiveness of ESP programs?

2. Literature Review

Literature mainly represents ESP as a method that helps learners satisfy their special language needs in various professional contexts (Basturkmen, 2010; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). In the context of entrepreneurial education, it has been shown that the role of the language, particularly English, is becoming a crucial determinant for the internationalization and success of a startup (e.g., Rialp, Rialp, & Knight, 2005; Zeng, Xie, & Tam, 2010). However, in general, there is a scarcity of research focused on the English language needs of Algerian startup holders (Boukraa, 2017; Haddad, 2019; Merabet, 2020; Zerari and Benhamouda, 2021; Chikhi and Benmokhtar, 2022). This scholarly gap further underlines the need for an ESP program relevant to the context, in which the unique linguistic and cultural challenges that the Algerian entrepreneurs face would have to be factored into the research. In this regard, ESP can further play an important role in increasing the set of language skills that are going to provide success to a business endeavor, especially in the context of empowering the entrepreneurial ventures of Algeria. In other words, ESP courses should be set up with specified objectives that intend to fulfill the linguistic requirements of the learners while accomplishing their academic or vocational tasks

The Department of Manufacturing and Engineering Sciences at Tlemcen University has identified ESP role in the preparation of

students for further integration into professional life as global citizens. On the other hand, traditional ways of teaching with the adopted materials did not meet the students' language needs; consequently, low proficiency levels, communication problems, and a lack of motivation have been noted. Thus, recently, research has been focused more and more on analyzing ESP teaching and learning situations, identifying students' language needs, and engaging stakeholders in the design of appropriate ESP courses to ensure successful implementation of the latter (Messaoudi and Elachachi, 2017)

ESP, or English for Specific Purposes, is the teaching of English as a foreign language focused on the specific language of targeted disciplines or occupations. According to Dudley-Evans and St John, ESP is defined as meeting the needs of the learners by using the underlying methodology and activities of the served discipline. In the business setting, ESP provides learners with specialized language skills for effective communication in entrepreneurial settings (Zerari and Benhamouda, 2021). Miliani (1994) asserted that techniques, teaching methods, and materials should be implemented in a way of developing the required competence for learners. The evaluation process stages are an integral part of the ESP teaching procedure. Assessment and course evaluation give feedback on the effectiveness of the course and teaching methods and suitability of materials, requiring revisions of the ESP course design (Nining Nining, 2019). This recommends more diffusion and furthering of ESP courses to meet the needs of learners in specific professional contexts, in this case, Algerian startup holders. According to Messaoudi and Hamzaoui-Elachachi (2017), the inadequacies of English traditional teaching methods in Algerian educational institutions often do not cater to the specific communicative needs of the learners, thus supplying them with low English proficiency and communication problems. As a needs-based approach, ESP targets narrowing this gap, on the ground that it designs language programs to

meet the predictable range of communicative needs of learners (Zerari and Benhamouda, 2021). This is especially important for startup holders because the ability to clearly express oneself and to have sufficient command of the language are foremost aspects for all types of international business activity, negotiations, or collaboration. Moreover, this is the kind of language teaching that has been designed to focus on specific languages that are concerned with target disciplines or occupations and which are parallel with the professional competencies required by startup holders. This is to say that such expressed specific needs would empower language skills when integrated with methodology and a set of activities specific to a particular discipline. The language skills learned through ESP would, therefore, not only lead the Algerian startup founder to competence but also to success in the global business world. Therefore, integration of ESP into programs for the development of language skills in Algerian startup holders is crucial if they are to participate and compete in business effectively.

Success for an Algerian startup founder lies in the level of his language competence to address standards within a global business context. Tailor-made language learning initiatives present an obvious need, as most of the courses available in English within the setting of an Algerian university lack targeted needs analysis and a focus on the communicative function of the language. This is the case, especially for startup holders looking to communicate for entrepreneurial purposes. As such, ESP courses, setting a particular language need among the learners to match with their academic or vocational tasks, should be of paramount implementation. In addition, teaching ESP and Business English will need to involve the selection and organization of items and materials to teach in relation to learners' needs, proficiency levels, objectives, and the number of hours available for training (Messaoudi and Elachachi, 2017).

These findings are important in pointing out that it is necessary to

integrate proper needs analysis and course design in ESP courses for the teaching of English to Algerian startup holders. Meeting entrepreneurs' language needs through language learning initiatives that are aligned with the specifics of these needs is thus of extreme importance in helping language skills play their part in securing the success of Algerian startups at global business levels.

In that respect, doing proper needs research on language learning is key in designing language programs that address real needs concerning Algerian startup holders. The Algerian context explains that knowledge about the learners' needs in the language, as underlined by the study of Messaoudi and Elachachi (2017), would help fight problems and issues arising from low proficiency levels, difficulty in communication, lack of motivation, and limited chance to use the language in life daily activities. This therefore underlines the need to establish the linguistic needs for business success amongst holders of startups and further anchor language learning programs on such needs.

A study by Lamri (2019), is on how blended learning modes and technology can help in improving reading skills in certain domains, such as legal English for law professionals. This approach answers the ever-growing demand for language learning strategies that are efficient and maximize the potential of using technology and innovative instructional materials in developing reading and language skills for startup holders within the Algerian entrepreneurial landscape. Drawing on the insights that arise from these studies, language programming could be designed to help the linguistic needs of Algerian startup owners, with a consequent increase in their potential for business success.

There are several difficulties in the implementation of ESP programs for startup holders in Algeria. One of the main challenges is the low proficiency in English among startup holders themselves since the traditional methods were not oriented toward the communicative

function of the language (Messaoudi and Elachachi, 2017). Moreover, many startup holders have communication problems and are not motivated because of the lack of opportunity to practice English in their daily lives. What is more, the fact that there is a lack of ESP materials targeted at the specific language needs of startup holders makes the implementation of effective language programs even more complicated (Lamri, 2019).

Proper needs analysis has to be conducted to understand the language requirements of the startup holders and to design ESP courses to help them. Moreover, technology can play a huge role in helping to develop reading comprehension and language skills, especially in technical or specialized settings like business and entrepreneurship—through activities such as blended learning approaches. Such solutions will help stakeholders better equip these startup holders with the requisite English language skills for business success globally.

3. Research Methodology

This research was conducted to learn vividly about the present status of English language proficiency among startup holders, as well as a view to identifying areas in which ESP programs might be able to make a difference. Therefore, empirical data has been collected through a structured online questionnaire using a quantitative approach. The sample for the research consisted of 37 holders of startups from various disciplines: English, French, Arabic, Technology, Economics, and Computer Sciences from Chlef University. The sample choice was made to have a diversified sample of startup holders operating under Ministerial Decision 1275 holding different academic backgrounds. Data were collected by means of an online questionnaire that managed to capture information on a number of key areas, such as:

- *Personal and Startup Information:* Demographic data, educational background, industry sector, and years of operation
- *Current Language Skills:* Self-assessed English proficiency, frequency of English use in business, and specific challenges in

business English.

- *ESP Needs:* This represents the perceived benefits of improving their English skills, what they feel they need most in business English, preferred methods for ESP training, and what factors influence their choices for ESP programs.

- *Impact and Recommendations:* The Business Impact of Better English, Other Support Needed, Suggestions to Improve the ESP.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data collected from the online questionnaire. Percentages were computed to denote the spread of responses across several categories. This approach provided a qualitative and orderly presentation of results, which has played an important role in revealing the prevailing state of English proficiency levels, gaps that exist, and preferences in ESP training.

The research work conformed to ethical guidelines for studies involving human subjects. Informed consent was sought from all participants in the study prior to the actual collection of data, wherein the objective of the study and their rights were clearly explained. The response was anonymized to retain confidentiality while all data were treated securely. It was assured that the participants' responses would only be employed within the confines of this study and not transferred to any third party.

Though giving useful insights on the understanding of the English language needs among Algerian startup holders, some limitations are to be mentioned:

- *Sample Size:* The sample size of 37 respondents gives only a preliminary insight, which cannot represent the population under study.

- *Self-Reported Data:* As data for language proficiency and business challenges were based on self-reported measures, there is the risk of bias due to subjectivity.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Personal and Start-up Information

Respondents were mainly male 68% and high-educated. 95% of them had a Master's Degree, and only 5% had a bachelor's Degree. A lot of education would probably signify a mature understanding of the business terms, but it would also mean that the vocabulary should be more advanced from the information presented to be understood. The majority of the respondents belong to the Technology sector at 45%, followed by Services at 25%, Manufacturing at 15%, and Healthcare at 15%. This represents the diversity of the startups with differing language needs.

In terms of how long their startups have been in operation, 20% of the respondents were under one year; 35% were 1-2 years; 30% were 3-5 years, and finally were 15% above five years. This difference in tenure furnishes a rich variety to understand the language needs of startups at different levels of maturity.

4.2 Current Language Skill

English Speaking Proficiency: The analysis of English proficiency revealed that 15% had an opinion they were beginner levels, 45% were intermediate, 30% were advanced, and 10% were fluent enough. This distribution illustrates that a good percentage of startup holders, i.e., 60%, are intermediate, and less than that. This can have an effect on their performance in business activities that require competency at heights in using the language.

Frequency of English Use in Business: 25% of the respondents used English daily, 40% did so weekly, 20% monthly, 10% rarely, and 5% never. This usage pattern underscores the fact that English is crucial for regular business dealings for many holders.

Areas of Business English in which Recipients Face Challenges: Respondents have identified several areas in the business English curriculum in which they face challenges. Most of them found business planning to be the most difficult of all, at 50%. 40% thought the main problems stemmed from pitching to investors and networking, and 35% thought that it was a problem to communicate internationally.

Marketing and sales and legal documentation were identified as 20% and 10% of the time, respectively.

4. 3 ESP Needs

Perceived Benefit of Improving English Skills: An overwhelming 85% of the respondents had an opinion that improving upon their English language skills will be somehow beneficial to their start-up business as opposed to a direct 5% who thought it would not be useful and then 10% of the total were unsure. This strong consensus placed importance on enhanced English skills as a tool for business success.

Business English Improvement Aspects: There was a felt need in the responses for improvement in certain areas of Business English. The requirements of the skills regarding business planning and strategy cropped up first with 60%, investor pitching and presentation came next at 55% whereas professional networking stood at 50%. Negotiation skills and writing business proposals and reports were favored by 30% and 40% respectively, of the respondents.

ESP Training Preference: When asked about their preference for ESP training, 45% would prefer an online course, with in-house workshops being the foremost preference of 30%; only 15% preferred an individual approach, while self-study material was best suited for 5%. This shows a leaning toward online and flexible methodology, often representing solutions that would be adaptive in different settings and learning styles.

Factors in Choosing an ESP Program: The respondents mentioned a number of the most important factors in selecting an ESP program. 55% rated relevance to their industry as one of the most crucial points, while the second most critical feature was flexibility of schedule at 50%. Other important features followed: cost at 40%, quality of the instructors at 35%, and support materials and resources at 30%.

4.4 Impact and Recommendations

Impact of English Skills: Respondents identified several types of additional support that would aid in improving their English skills. A total of 70% of the respondents thought that with better language proficiency, they could access a larger international market, 65% believed that a better command of the language could help them communicate effectively with investors, and 60% of the respondents felt that it would enable them to plan and execute the business in a better way. Strengthening professional relationships and networking was also selected as a benefit by 50% of respondents.

Additional Help Required to Develop English: The additional help that respondents agreed would help them a lot to develop their English was: 55% said business English resources were at their disposal; 50% were comfortable with a networking event happening in the circle of professional English speakers; 45% said government or institutional help and 40% said mentorship from the older, successful entrepreneurs.

Comments and Recommendations: In general, more than one respondent suggested the need for additional ESP programs directed toward business contexts and challenges. It was recommended, too, that practical workshops should be allowed, which could give students the possibility of practicing business English in the sphere of business application. Furthermore, respondents emphasized more than once that ESP training on entrepreneurship should be included in the mentoring practice to give integral support to the holders of startups.

5 Discussion

5.1 Language Ability and its Consequences

The results show a broad distribution at different levels of English proficiency among the responders, where 60% of them think that their skills are Intermediate or worse. This distribution thus insinuates that many startup holders may struggle with complex business tasks that require advanced English skills. Although effective communication is

important for having success in business planning, pitching to investors, and networking, the current level of proficiency may hinder one from engaging efficiently in these very critical activities. The frequency of English use among the respondents indicates that most of them indeed do apply it regularly. This frequent use underlines its importance as a language in their everyday business activities.

5.2 Problematic Areas in ESP and Needs Identification

Specific areas that the study identified, where most of the respondents had problems in business English, were associated with business planning, pitching to investors, and networking. These areas are quite relevant to entrepreneurial success, hence posing a stringent requirement to have ESP programs targeting these particular skills. It is in light of this complexity and the high stakes involved that targeted training in improving such skills is necessary for both business planning and pitching to investors. Lower levels of difficulty probably imply that marketing/sales and legal documentation are less important, or easier to handle due to existing knowledge or resources. In any case, this differential in the levels of difficulties again points to the need for the focus of ESP training on the most exacting and impactful areas.

5.3 Preferences for ESP Training

There was a clear preference for ESP training in online courses by 45% and in-person workshops by 30% of the respondents. This preference aligns with the current trends in education, where flexibility and accessibility are valued highly. Interest in online courses is remarkably high, which would be consistent with a demand for training that can be fitted into packed schedules, while the preference for in-person workshops indicates a desire for interactive and practical learning experiences. The limited interest shown in group classes and self-study materials may indicate that the holders of startups want to have more personalized ways of training. This result underscores how ESP programs should offer flexible and tailored solutions to meet each

case of learning needs and preferences.

5.4 Factors Influencing ESP Program Selection

The choices for ESP programs were based on industry relevance and flexibility of schedule. This would prove that the training has to be pertinent to the sectors concerned and accommodate varied schedules of busy entrepreneurs. The cost and quality of instructors are equally important and underscore the need for both affordability and quality in training options. These preferences divulge that ESP programs would be relevant to the industry, with flexibility of formats to get the job effectively done for a startup founder.

5.5 Impact of English Skills

Many of the surveyees recognized that better language skills would allow for easier access to international markets, enhanced communication with investors, and improvement in business planning and execution. These insights underscore the value of investing in ESP training as a means to significant business outcomes. Furthermore, the focus on professional relationships and networking development highlights the language component in the establishment of good business relationships and entrepreneurial opportunity growth.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Tailored ESP Programs

In order to help the holders of these startups in Algeria, ESP syllabi have to be thoughtfully designed with programs relevant to the unique business needs of these holders. Business planning, investor pitching, and networking are some of the important areas that need prime attention. This would make the training relevant and appropriate for the challenges of the startups and should be accomplished by using real situations and terminology from these business activities in customized content so that trainees acquire practical and applicable skills they can use right away in their entrepreneurial ventures.

6.2 Increase Accessibility

Startup holders ' preferences and schedules are different, so the

accessibility of ESP training needs to be increased. For instance, offering multiple formats—like online courses and hands-on workshops—would make the training more accessible for a pool with varied learning styles and time availability. Online courses offer flexibility to those constrained by time, and on-campus workshops provide for a more interactive and participative learning environment. Having options available in both formats empowers each founder to participate in the training as is most conducive to their needs.

6.3 Support Resources

Besides core ESP training, increasing support resources is vital in maximizing the effectiveness of language skills development. Providing supplementary materials, such as business English guides and case studies, can reinforce learning and offer additional practice. Opportunities for networking with English-speaking professionals would further help holders use acquired language skills in real business life and establish relevant business contacts. Finally, a mentorship program with experienced entrepreneurs can offer close individual guidance and support that fosters the development of language and business skills.

6.4 Integrate ESP with Mentoring

Such a combination of ESP training with entrepreneurial mentoring might create a support system for the holders of startups. By integrating language training with mentoring, the development of language skills is applied to business situations in practice, while seeking advice and getting feedback from experienced mentors. In this way, the development of language proficiency is enriched by strategic business views and support. Mentorship will help holders avoid the pitfalls of entrepreneurship while applying language skills in real-world scenarios.

7. CONCLUSION

This study offers useful insights into the issues of ESP as a driver

for the business success of Algerian startup holders. There can be an addition of competency in business planning, investor communication, and international networking if a focused ESP program is designed to meet the specific language needs of the startups. The creation of ESP courses at a customized level, enhancement of the accessibility of ESP, enriching the support resources for ESP, and integration of ESP with mentoring can substantially contribute to the growth and success of an entrepreneurial ecosystem within Algeria. These would not only enhance language skills for holders but also equip them with tools to sail across complexities in the global business environment toward long-term success.

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