



ESP in higher education: a didactic framework for the training of the students of economics at the Université Peleforo Gon Coulibaly

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Abstract: This study aims at investigating current ESP practices in the Department of economics and suggests ways for improvements. In this action research study, questionnaires and interviews were used for collecting data that went through quantitative and qualitative analysis. Results showed that there is a huge contradiction between current ESP practices in the department of economics and the very objectives of ESP instructions due to an absence of a didactic framework, an ignorance of the theoretical foundations of ESP teaching and a neglect of students' language needs both in the academic and professional context. My suggestions for the improvement of the current ESP teaching are fourfold: Resort to the functional approach to language teaching in order to facilitate learners' entrance in the professional life, the training should insist on the language register appropriate to the students' specialty through discourse analysis, a close collaboration with the department of economics with an emphasis to learners' needs is essential for the selection of relevant contents and a didactic framework should be made available for course or syllabus design.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes (ESP) - didactic framework - needs - functionalism- discourse analysis.

Résumé : Cette étude a pour but d'enquêter sur les pratiques actuelles au niveau de l'enseignement de l'anglais de spécialité tel que pratiqué au département de sciences économiques en vue de faire des suggestions pour une amélioration. Au cours de cette recherche-action, l'utilisation de questionnaire et d'interviews ont permis de collecter des données qui ont été soumises à des analyses quantitatives et qualitatives. Les résultats obtenus ont révélé une énorme contradiction entre les pratiques actuelles de l'enseignement de l'anglais de spécialité au département de sciences économiques et les objectifs mêmes de l'enseignement de l'anglais de spécialité en raison d'une absence de cadre didactique, d'une méconnaissance des fondements théoriques de l'enseignement de l'anglais de spécialité et d'une négligence des besoins langagiers des étudiants aussi bien dans le cadre académique que professionnel. Mes suggestions pour l'amélioration des pratiques actuelles sont de quatre ordres : recourir à l'approche fonctionnelle de l'enseignement des langues afin de faciliter l'insertion des apprenants dans la vie professionnelle, la formation devrait insister sur le registre de langue approprié à la spécialité des étudiants à travers l'analyse du discours, collaborer étroitement avec le département de sciences économiques avec un accent particulier aux besoins des apprenants est essentiel pour le choix de contenus pertinents et la mise à disposition d'un cadre didactique pour la conception de cours ou de syllabus.

Mots-clés : Anglais de spécialité (ASP) - cadre didactique - besoins - fonctionnalisme- analyse du discours.

Introduction

In today's business world, training communicatively competent workers remains a real challenge. For the issue is not just learning or acquiring bits of the language as advocated by the structuralists, but rather the ability to combine those elements in a meaningful sentence to participate in a real communication situation. Thus, the teaching or the learning of English has become purposive. As Cook (1992, p. 476) puts it, "language teaching should try to produce multicompetent individuals". Kirkgöz (1999) will not oppose the idea. Quoting Jones and Davies (1983), she says "foreign languages have been learned not for their own sake but as vehicles for social and economic contacts and for the transportation of ideas" (59). Therefore, the objective of language teaching clearly stands out. Language teaching should be directed to fill learners' needs for communication not only in the academic sphere but beyond in their professional lives. ESP appears to be a means to this end for it "concentrates more on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures" (Lorenzo, 2005, p. 1). Being the *Lingua Franca* of science, technology and business, the relevance of English for higher education is undeniable. ESP is taught in all the Departments of the Université Peleforo Gon Coulibaly (UPGC)¹ including the economics Department. However, after nine (9) years of implementation, one relevant question remains unanswered: How effective are the current ESP courses at the Department of economics? This question calls for two subsidiary questions: what activities are the students involved in? Do they allow the students to be communicatively competent in their field?

1. Review of literature and theoretical framework

1.1. Review of literature

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) emerged in the 1960s in order to meet the demand of a brave new world and prepare linguistically competent individuals who can easily use the jargon related to their field in a real communication setting. Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 19) define it as "an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning". The aim of ESP is to create "a new generation of learners who knew specifically why they were learning a language" (6). According to Pierson and Thomas (2000, p. 95), what is required from ESP learners is their ability "to develop appropriate communication skills

¹ Université Peleforo Gon Coulibaly (UPGC) in Côte-d'Ivoire. is the university where the author of this paper is currently teaching English as a Foreign Language at the Department of English.

both for face-to-face and for written communications (...) and to ensure that they develop a style that is appropriate and relevant for their audience". Basturkmen (2006) does not take a different view when he posits that "language is learnt not for its own sake or for the sake of gaining a general education, but to smooth the path to entry or greater linguistic efficiency in academic, professional or workplace environments" (18).

Hence, ESP courses as well as materials will have to be tailored according to a new vision. In contrast with General English, ESP is something broader. This approach to language teaching concentrates more on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures. It aims to teach English to students or people who need it for specific purposes such as work. Richards and Schmidt (2010, p. 181) rightly define ESP as "a language course or program of instruction in which the content and aims are fixed by the specific needs of a particular group of learners". Johns (2013) goes further as to say that ESP has been, at its core, a "practitioners' movement, devoted to establishing, through careful research, the needs and relevant discourse features for a targeted group of students" (6). For him, the role of ESP practitioner is first identifying students' needs and then designing courses and teaching materials accordingly.

However, regardless of these appealing features, ESP has been discredited as a self-centered and narrow-minded approach. According to Belcher (2013, p. 544), "some in ESP might well argue that the community that ESP professionals know the least about is its own". Swales (2011, p. 273) tries to explain this situation in these terms: "We have had, over the 50 year history of ESP, all too little careful research in what actually happens in our classes". Nevertheless, the significance of ESP courses is undeniably acknowledged in today's world.

1.2 *Theoretical framework*

Discourse analysis and functionalism lay the groundwork for this study. For Stubbs (1983, p. 1) discourse analysis refers to "the linguistic analysis of naturally occurring connected spoken or written discourse" which "attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause." It aims to understand how language is used in real life situations. For according to Schiffrin Deborah (1994),

It is difficult to separate language from the rest of the world. It is this ultimate inability to separate language from how it is used in the world in which we live that provides the most basic reason for the interdisciplinary basis of discourse

analysis. To understand the language of discourse, then, we need to understand the world in which it resides; and to understand the world in which language resides, we need to go outside of linguistics (419).

Thus, the aim of discourse analysts according to Tracy (2001, p. 726) is to “study a particular unit of language (above the sentence) or how language is used socially” to perform social functions. The concern of discourse analysts is the study of language in use in social contexts which differ from one another. What matters for them are not the formal properties of language. But rather the social contexts of conversation, the organization and the processes involved in the encoding and decoding of its meaning. Doing so is really necessary for, she explains that “Individual sentences can be interesting, unusual, or mysterious, but when separated from context, they lack real meaning” (708). Therefore, she admits:

Classroom pedagogy can no longer limit itself to the linguistic corpus of the target language; it has to expand its activities and planning to include sociocultural and pragmatic considerations. In order to use a language effectively, the language user needs to have knowledge of the various factors that impact human communication (711).

Simply puts, discourse analysis encourages a full immersion of learners into their discourse community.

Functionalism is an approach to language largely developed in the 1960s by the linguist philosopher Michael Halliday. He was greatly influenced by the works of prominent figures among others his teacher John Firth, the Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski and the Prague school.

Functionalists rely on a pragmatic view of language as social interaction. Their belief is clearly revealed by Halliday (1973, p. 345) who asserts that “language structures cannot be idealized and studied without taking into account the circumstances of their use, including the extra linguistic social context”. Functionalism focuses on the use of language in real situations in order to achieve social goals. Tenants of this approach hold that language is first viewed as a system of communication rather than as a set of rules. As maintained by Halliday (1975, p. 346) it is not “a system of rules which govern language structure, but rather meaning potential, what the speaker/hearer can (what he can mean, if you like), not what he knows”. As such, functional grammar differs from the traditional school grammar. For, it focuses on language as a meaning making resource generally expressed through three metafunctions including the ideational, the textual, and the interpersonal

functions. What matters with functionalism is the function of the sentence, the writer's aim in writing a sentence or the speaker's aim in producing an utterance and this aim is beyond the sentence level. Thus, it appears that any linguistic structure is not done arbitrary but purposes to satisfy peoples' communicative needs. Therefore, language acquisition includes "mastering certain basic functions of language and developing a meaning potential for each" (Mitchell & Myles, 2004, p. 54). Allen (2007) strongly supports this idea for he declares that:

Linguistic structures can only be understood and explained with reference to the semantic and communicative functions of language, whose primary function is to be a vehicle for social interaction among human beings (254).

What matters with functionalism is the acquisition of skills that can be used in a professional context, at the expense of a more theoretical perspective which considers education as nothing as an intellectual venture. Both discourse analysis and the functional approach to language teaching seem to be relevant in this study, for both seem to harmonize with the main objective of ESP instructions which envisions to satisfy learners' communicative needs in the academic and professional settings.

2. An investigation of the ESP classrooms of the Department of economics, UPGC

2.1. Methodological Approach

The study was carried out at the Department of Economics of the UPGC. The population consisted of Master 1 students learning either economics or management who have at least completed seven (07) years of training in General English before entering university. Like the other Departments of the university, except the Department of English where English is the medium and the object of instruction, English is a compulsory subject for economics students. For each specialty, twelve (12) hours are theoretically devoted to the teaching of ESP which includes texts studies, translations, vocabulary items and grammar points.

- Research paradigm

The paradigm adopted in this research is action research. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, p. 1), action research is:

A form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009, p. 42) go further as to say that action research is a “systematic and intentional inquiry” which consists in seeing deeper in a situation in order to have more insight into the identified problems and then bring about practical solutions to address them quickly and efficiently. For this study, I first investigated ESP classes in the economics Department; I then identified some weaknesses in the practices of ESP. Finally, I made some suggestions for the improvement of the situation.

- Data collection and analysis

✓ Sampling

The technique adopted for this study is convenience sampling which consists in selecting individuals on the ground of their availability. The first sample during the academic year 2018-2019 consisted of forty-one 41 students, among seventeen (17) in management and twenty-four (24) in economics. The second sample during the academic year 2019-2020 comprised seventy (70) students, including twenty-eight (28) in management and forty-two (42) in economics. The third sample during the academic year 2020-2021 consisted of ninety-four (94) students, fifty-five (55) in management and thirty-nine (39) in economics. The total number of students involved in the investigation was two hundred and five (205). The research covered three academic years in order to have a representative sample that could accurately reflect the situation at the Department of economics.

- Data collection technique

The data were collected according to two (02) different perspectives. A questionnaire was designed to collect data from the students. Two semi-structured interview guides were used to collect data from students and their teachers.

- Data analysis procedures

The data collected were analyzed according to two (02) different perspectives: quantitative analysis (frequency analysis) of the data from the questionnaire and qualitative analysis (content analysis) of the data from the interviews.

2.2. Presentation of the results

- The results from quantitative analysis of data

The results of quantitative analysis of the data collected are presented in four (4) multidimensional tables.

Table 1: What do you need English for in your specialty?

Activity Frequency	Communica te with foreign experts		For my future career		To do research		For reading texts, and understand		To continue my studies abroad		To participate in conferences	
	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%
1	37	18.05	16	7.80	170	82.94	16	7.80	64	31.22	118	57.56
2	70	34.15	69	33.66	11	5.36	90	43.90	27	13.17	60	29.27
3	40	19.51	66	32.19	11	5.36	49	23.90	62	30.24	27	13.17
4	58	28.29	54	26.35	13	6.34	50	24.40	52	25.37	0	0
Total	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100

As seen in the above table, although 37 students (18.05%) did not feel the need to communicate with foreign experts, most of them acknowledged the significance of the language in various situations. One hundred and sixty eight of them (81.95%) thought they need English to communicate with foreign experts. According to 16 students (92.2%), English is necessary for their future career and for texts reading and comprehension, while 141 others (68.78%) believed that English is needed to continue their studies abroad. Almost all the students (82.94%) estimated that they don't need English to do research, although 17.06% of them took a different view. In addition, even if more than half of the students (57.56%) thought English is not needed to participate in conferences, for 87 others (42.44%), it is.

Table 2: What sort of activity does your teacher ask you to do?

Activity \ Frequency	Read texts and answer questions		Grammar exercises		Vocabulary exercises		vocabulary and grammar exercises		Translation exercises		Essay writing		Oral presentations		Discussion	
	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%
1	36	17.56	0	0	0	0	0	0	85	41.46	195	95.12	176	85.85	164	80
2	67	32.68	63	30.73	10	4.88	42	20.49	42	20.49	10	4.88	29	14.15	41	20
3	24	11.71	75	36.59	98	47.80	83	40.49	34	16.59	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	78	38.05	67	32.68	97	47.32	80	39.02	44	21.46	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100

Table 2 shows that classroom activities generally involved vocabulary (95.12%), grammar (69.21%), both vocabulary and grammar (79.51%), reading for comprehension (49.76%), and translation (38.05%). Less attention is paid to essay writing (4.88%), oral presentations (14.15%) and discussion (20%).

Table 3: Which activity do you have difficulty with?

Activity \ Frequency	Read texts and answer questions		Grammar exercises		Vocabulary exercises		Translation exercises		Essay writing		Oral presentations		Discussion	
	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%
1	30	14.63	8	3.90	0	0	5	2.44	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	61	29.76	13	6.34	44	21.46	7	3.41	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	64	31.22	35	17.08	77	37.56	29	14.15	83	40.49	68	33.17	90	43.90
4	50	24.39	149	72.68	84	40.98	164	80	122	59.51	137	66.83	115	56.10
Total	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100

Table 3 shows that all the 205 students (100%) had real difficulties in essay writing, oral presentations and discussion. Besides, more than half of them experienced some difficulties in translation (94.15%), grammar (89.76%), vocabulary (78.54%) and even in reading for comprehension tasks (55.61%).

Table 4: Did the courses help you fill your needs?

Attitudes \ Frequency	I am now able to communicate with foreign experts		I am now able to use it in my future career		I am now able to do some research		I am now able to read texts and understand		I am now able to continue my studies abroad		I am now able to participate in conferences	
	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%	Nber	%
1	198	96.59	191	93.17	108	52.68	0	0	116	56.58	205	100
2	7	3.41	10	4.88	97	47.32	72	35.12	89	43.42	0	0
3	0	0	04	1.95	0	0	36	17.56	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	97	47.32	0	0	0	0
Total	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100	205	100

Table 4 indicates that all the 205 students (100%) totally disagreed that the activities carried out in the classroom could prepare them to participate in conferences, to do research in their field or to communicate with foreign experts. Also, for 116 students (56.38%), the training received could not help to continue their studies abroad. Moreover, although 133 students (64.88 %) acknowledged that classroom activities helped them to read texts and understand, this is not the case for 72 (35.12%) others. Only four students (1.95%) hoped to use the training received in the classroom in their future career, whereas 201 others (98.05%) totally disagree with the idea. It appears that many students underestimated the importance of English in research and for participating in conferences. Even so, most of them still acknowledged that English is necessary for their future career, for texts reading and comprehension, for communicating with foreign experts and studying abroad.

In addition, classroom activities which initially intended to satisfy student's needs failed since they focused on vocabulary items (95.12%) and grammar points (79.51%). Consequently, the students met difficulties in essay writing, oral presentations, discussion and translation

- The results from qualitative analysis of data

The following lines present the results of qualitative analysis of the data collected from interviews.

A. Students' responses

All the interviewees acknowledged the significance of English in their specialty. According to Neeta², a student in management,

Most of the reference books we have to consult this year and the next for writing our memoires are written in English. Generally, for getting the main idea we resort to applications such as google translation. Unfortunately the translations we receive there are often wrong.

Ruben goes along with the idea. He even adds that

Speaking and writing English is very important for pursuing higher education abroad. English proficiency is always requested while filling an application form for getting scholarships. We need English today as students but we will need it tomorrow in our career.

Andy goes further as to say that

Knowing English is 'super important'. English opens job opportunities. One of our professors keeps reminding us that there are two things that we should master

² All participants' names are pseudonyms.

apart from our specialty: English and computer science. He himself sadly lost a well-paid job in an international institution for not being able to speak English. So we need English in order to participate in conferences. Just imagine how embarrassing it is to be among English speaking partners without being able to say an English word!

Questioned about the skills they need to develop in their field, Rodolph declares:

We need to speak the language fluently. That presupposes that we know the jargon as well as grammar rules because our training is not to communicate with people on the street but rather with experts.

For Robert,

In addition to speaking the language, we need to be able to translate sentences or ideas from French to English and vice versa. Writing is also very important. It can include argument essay, letter writing, writing an abstract, a minute etc.

According to Maria, reading is unavoidable. She thinks:

When you are good at reading, it helps you to have a data bank. While reading you can store many words in your memory and bring them back in any kind of situation.

Of course, one thing is to be aware of learners' needs, another is to satisfy those needs. When asked about the effectiveness of the training received, Rodolph answers:

Frankly speaking, I'm not really satisfied due to the fact that like the majority of my classmates, I have neglected English for several years. We don't have basic knowledge. So the training received in four (4) hours could hardly satisfy our needs. Just learning one or two grammar points or few vocabularies is not enough. I'm actually unable to understand and use the language. As economics we need to master the English related to our field in order to communicate with experts, attend conferences and so on.

Neeta does not take a different view for she confesses:

We have serious problems for several reasons. In the second cycle of secondary school, contrary to the classes of literature, English was not given much attention. For, its coefficient decreases from three (3) to one (1) while that of scientific subjects is four (4). So we prefer working hard in these areas. It is only when we entered university that we were told that English is very important for economics students. Learning a language is not magic. It takes time so we cannot pretend that the courses we had this academic year turned us automatically into good speakers of English. I mean, reading two texts and trying to answer comprehension questions or doing little translation or vocabulary. We are aware that we need to play our part but we don't have enough time. Am I wrong, Doctor?

Robert adds:

I learnt something the very day of the course. But I've presently forgotten everything for the simple reason that the course is scheduled for one day. It's not enough. In such a case, how could we use the knowledge received for a future career, to attend seminars, for research and many other situations? Also changing teachers year after year makes learning difficult. I wish we keep the same teacher for two or three years so that he could follow our progress in order to know where we need most help. In addition, things like oral presentations, English clubs or seminars can give us opportunities to improve our language proficiency.

From the above reactions, it appears that economics students acknowledged the significance of English in their field throughout their academic life and in their future career. However, they still have a feeling of disappointment. For, the kind and amount of the activities performed in the classroom as well as the time devoted to them could not really satisfy their needs. Nevertheless, as they suggested, an increase of classroom activities and their own involvement can help.

B. Teachers' responses

The answers provided by the teachers are not far from those of their students. Like the students, teachers in charge of ESP classes acknowledged the importance of English for economics students. This was clearly expressed by Doctor Assi who said:

Many students unfortunately ignore the tremendous effect of English in the academic setting. For writing their memoirs or thesis this academic year and the next, they will need English because most of the reference books they will need to consult are written in English. Will they resort to translation applications? I'm not sure this could help because those applications generally provide literal translations even the wrong ones. Even if they happen to be reliable imagine the amount of time that could be spent for this kind of exercise! Moreover, the mastery of English is necessary for pursuing high education here and there. I mean abroad. Regardless of the types of scholarships they will have to apply for, their language proficiency is one of the first requirements. And this should be clear in their mind.

In the same line, Doctor Koffi declared:

English is very important today. I will say it's a passport to a better life since it opens many opportunities. I mean job opportunities. It's one of the factors for being hired in international institutions. In this twenty-first century, if you neither know how to use a keyboard for typing a text nor master the international language you are nothing than an illiterate. For participating in conferences or seminars or communicating with international partners and experts English is omnipresent.

Questioned about the skills the students need to develop in their specialty, Doctor Brou thought:

The students should be able to handle a conversation with experts. This involves mastering the jargon related to their field. Any time we consider a grammar point it's for helping them to make correct sentences in order to be good speakers in the professional setting. Besides they need to develop good writing skills. Unfortunately the timetable does not allow us to spend much time for speaking or communicative activities.

As far as Doctor Ahoua is concerned,

Students should have good reading skills. Reading can help them discover many words or phrases that could be stored in their memories. This will improve their translation skills that in turn will boost their motivation. That's why, with my students, we used to do some reading comprehension tasks based on any kind of texts related to economics.

Doctor Assi goes along with the ideas developed above but goes further by stressing the importance of translation activities. As he explained:

The students should master both languages, their L1 and English otherwise, no improvement could be forecasted. The students should be able to translate texts from French to English and vice versa. The more they perform translation tasks, the more they will be familiar with technical vocabulary. Unfortunately this is not possible with the timetable.

When asked to evaluate the training received, Doctor Brou acknowledged:

To be honest, the students have forgotten many things about the language. Which miracle are we going to perform in just a single day? It's true that most of them succeeded the exam but in reality, they cannot speak the language fluently. Time shortage did not allow us to do many activities. Reading a text, considering one or two grammar points or some vocabulary items is not sufficient. I wish we were given much time for more practice in order to equip our students for professional life where they will need to communicate with experts or attend conferences.

Doctor Koffi noticed:

I really appreciated their quick reactions the very day of the course. But actually I don't think they remember something from what we did. The course is scheduled for one day which is less and anti-pedagogical. In addition, since there is no English club, oral presentations could make up the deficit but this is quite impossible with the current timetable and room problems. Most students have completely forgotten basic grammar rules such as the formation of the simple present or reporting sentences.

For Doctor Assi,

The expectations regarding ESP instructions remained unsatisfied because since secondary school, students' motivation for learning English decreased. Due to the low coefficient of English in scientific classes (attended by current economics students) most students neglected English at the expense of scientific subjects. For such students, we cannot expect a rapid growth. Learning a language is a long process. Students themselves need to have an inner motivation and be fully involved in the learning process otherwise all the effort made by the teacher will be fruitless.

Like the students, the teachers are aware of the importance of English in the students' academic life and in their future career. Yet, they still have a feeling of disappointment for the time allotted to the course could hardly help to meet the students' needs. However, they think, apart from an increase of classroom activities, a deep involvement of the students is required. The data collected from both the questionnaire and the interviews reveal the importance of English for economics students. Yet, time constraint as well as the types of activities carried out in the classroom could not help improve their language proficiency. They still have some problems in reading, writing, speaking and translation. Consequently, both teachers and students remained dissatisfied for not reaching their goals.

3. Interpretation of the results, discussion and suggestions

3.1 Interpretation of the results and discussion

The information provided by the entire population investigated highlights the importance of English throughout economics students' academic and professional life. In their academic life, English is needed for doing research, writing abstract, projects' presentations or studying abroad (See table 1). During their future career, English will be needed for participating in international conferences or seminars as well as for communicating with foreign experts or economic partners.

However, these goals are far from being reached for the students are still unable to use the language in various situations, communicating with experts on economic issues, participating in conferences, doing research, writing essays, presenting projects or exposes, translating texts and studying abroad (See table 4). The interpretation of this situation is fivefold. First, students' needs seemed to be disregarded during the courses for the activities carried out in the classroom focus on grammar points and vocabulary items related to their field. Thus, ESP courses consisted of a mere acquisition of the technical jargon instead of teaching the language as a whole. This way of doing things deprives language of its social functions and is light years away from the very objectives of the functional approach to language teaching as mentioned in the theoretical framework (Halliday, *op. cit.*, p. 345). In fact, teaching discrete points of a language or knowing elements of a language as encouraged by structuralists, counts for nothing unless learners are able to combine all those elements in a meaningful communication situation (Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 254). This implies a mastery of language registers which could differ from one area to another depending on the discourse community since the prime function of language is

communication. In short, ESP learners should be able to perform several tasks that could prepare them to interact with people in various settings.

Second, it appears that there is no course design because there is no precise syllabus. As soon as courses are scheduled and timetable released, each teacher is free to decide on the content of the courses to be delivered. So, things are done intuitively. Nothing is prepared in advance. A needs' analysis is not conducted beforehand although many researchers among others Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) prescribe it for it is "the cornerstone of ESP" instruction (12). Unfortunately, such attitude is highly subjective and could obscure students' real needs, giving the impression that ESP instruction has no theoretical foundations.

Third, concerning classroom materials, the data instruct us that there is no formal textbook. Teachers used to download texts from the internet and made them available to students.

Fourth, although twelve hours were initially devoted to ESP learning the course actually lasts only four (4) or eight (8) hours. This shows a lack of interest for the language at the expense of basic subjects.

Fifth, students' low proficiency in English is also related to a lack of interest. Having neglected the language for several years, they have no lexical or contextual background on which to build ESP learning. Sadly, for most of them, ESP courses appeared as their first experience with the language. Surprisingly, they dare not make effort for improvement since they seem to ignore the significance of English as a subject discipline and beyond its importance in their future career.

3.2. A didactic framework for the improvement of the practice of ESP

Table 5: A didactic framework

Periods	Phases	Activities	Outcomes
Before the course	1	In collaboration with the Department of economics, go through the curriculum in order to know its content	Helps ESP instructors to select suitable materials and design courses that meet learners' needs.
	2	Still with the assistance of the Department of economics, design an appropriate syllabus and select suitable materials	
	3	Organize a meeting with the students. During the meeting, conduct a needs analysis	

During the course	4	<p>Syllabus presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make classroom materials available to the students - Clearly define course objectives - Present the content to the class - Provide the students with a bibliography 	Allows learners to know the starting point as well as the finishing one in order to remain focused on their goals.
	5	Use of visual aids	Helps learners to see and hear people using the language communicatively.
	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Text reading ➤ Classroom interactions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role-play - Discussion. - Short project presentations ➤ Written assignments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Essay writing - Translation 	<p>Provides learners' with language background through vocabulary items and grammar points.</p> <p>Boosts learners' motivation for increase participation.</p> <p>Prepares learners to writing summaries, projects or minutes.</p> <p>Increases confidence for participating in conversations, debates or conferences.</p>
After the course	7	<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Ask learners to compare their actual language proficiency to the one they had prior to the training.</p>	Promotes self-assurance and the desire for increased proficiency.

This didactic framework involves three (3) periods (Before the course-during the course and after the course) divided up into seven (7) phases. During the first period, ESP instructors are encouraged to cooperate with the economics Department in order to get in touch with the academic curriculum to design courses and select materials accordingly (Phase 1 and 2). This could be done through workshops organized by the Department of English. Still, in this period, the instructors conduct needs analysis for identifying learners' needs in order to tailor classroom activities according to the students' needs (Phase 3).

Needs analysis could be conducted through questions such as the following ones: Is English important in your specialty? What do you need English for? Do you have any difficulties in English? Which ones? What are your expectations by the end of the English course?

The next period which happens during the course is also made up of three (3) other phases. The syllabus is first presented to learners. Classroom materials are made available to the students. Then, course objectives are clearly defined as well as the content of the lesson. A bibliography is provided for further research on the course. Doing so allows learners to know the starting point as well as the finishing one in order to remain focused on their goals (Phase 4). The fifth phase has to do with the use of visual aids which help learners to see and hear people using the language communicatively (Phase 5). This phase is a real source of motivation because it will help learners to understand that mastering the English related to their field is not beyond their reach. The second period ends with text reading, classroom interactions and written assignments (Phase 6). Text reading provides the learners' with language background through vocabulary items and grammar points. Classroom interactions give ways for practice. This is done through role play, discussions or Short project presentations based either on the topic dealt with in the video presentation or any other topic included in the syllabus. The aim of these interactions is to boost learners' motivation to increase participation. When the learners seemed to improve in communicative activities, then the instructor moves for writing skills through written assignments intending to prepare learners to writing summaries, projects or minutes to increase confidence for participating in conversations, debates or conferences.

The last period is devoted to evaluation which will consist in comparing learners' actual language proficiency to the one they initially had (Phase 7). This last phase is necessary for it presents feedback of the training received to encourage self-assurance and the desire for increased proficiency.

Conclusion

My concern in this paper was to scrutinize the current ESP practices at the Department of economics of the Université Peleforo Gon Coulibaly in order to make some suggestions for improvements. The study sought to answer the following preoccupations: how effective are the current ESP courses at the Department of economics? What activities are the students involved in? Do they allow the students to be communicatively competent in their field? The data collected by means of questionnaire and interviews reveal that there is a huge contradiction between current ESP practices in the Department of economics and the

expectations of ESP teaching for there is no didactic framework, the theoretical foundations of ESP teaching are totally unknown to most teachers and students' needs are actually neglected.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for drastic changes in ESP teaching in the Department of economics and this could be extended to the other departments of the university. This includes four areas. First, the functional approach to language teaching as suggested by Halliday (1973, 1975, op cit.) should highly be encouraged since it helps to break out of old fruitless practices and turn to innovative ones in order to facilitate learners' entrance in the professional life for the teaching of discrete points of the language happens to be both inefficient and ineffective. Two, owing to the fact that ESP learners should be able to use the language in various situations as suggested by discourse analysis, the training should insist on language registers appropriate to learners' specialty. This might in turn provide them with the language repertoire they need both for their studies and their future professional careers. Three, cooperating with the Department receiving ESP instructions (in this case the economics Department) and conducting a needs analysis beforehand are essential to select relevant contents for students instead of doing things intuitively. Four, a didactic framework for course or syllabus design is highly requested since it would provide teachers with guidelines for their own classroom practices and allow both teachers and learners to follow progress. Undoubtedly Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) have not mistakenly used the word 'practitioners' in reference with ESP instructors for their work involves much more than teaching.

The above suggestions should not be considered a panacea to ESP teaching in the Department of economics. Yet, I think their implementation would greatly improve learners' language proficiency which might positively impact their academic and professional life.

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APPENDIX n°1: Questionnaire addressed to students

This questionnaire aims to collect data about the teaching/learning of English in your department. We would be grateful for your genuine answers that will exclusively be used for educational ends. Many thanks.

Please circle the number corresponding to your choice

1= never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = often; 4 = very often.

1. What do you need English for in your specialty?
 - a. I need it to communicate with foreign experts 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - b. It is important for my future career 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - c. I need it to do research 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - d. I need it for reading texts, books or magazines and understand 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - e. I need to continue my studies abroad 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - f. I need it to participate in conferences 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - g. Others.....
2. During the English class, what sort of activity does your teacher ask you to do?
 - a. Read texts and answer questions 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - b. Grammar exercises 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - c. Vocabulary exercises 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - d. Both vocabulary and grammar exercises 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - e. Translation exercises 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - f. Essay writing 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - g. Oral presentations 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - h. Discussions 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - i. Others.....
3. Which language skill do you have difficulty with?
 - a. Read texts and answer questions 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - b. Grammar exercises 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - c. Vocabulary exercises 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - d. Both vocabulary and grammar exercises 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - e. Translation exercises 1. 2. 3. 4.

- f. Essay writing 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - g. Oral presentations 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - h. Discussions 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - i. Others
4. Did the courses help you fill your needs?
Please circle the number corresponding to your choice
1= Totally disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Agree; 4= Totally agree
- a. I am now able to communicate with foreign experts 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - b. I am now able to use it in my future career 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - c. I am now able to do some research 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - d. I am now able to reading texts and understand 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - e. I am now able to continue my studies abroad 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - f. I am now able to participate in conferences 1. 2. 3. 4.
 - a. Others.....

APPENDIX n°2: Interview guide for the students

- 1. Is English important in your specialty?
.....
- 2. Which language skills do you need to develop?
.....
- 3. Do you have the impression that the courses help you to develop those skills?
.....
- 4. Could you make some suggestions for improving your ESP learning?
.....
.....

APPENDIX n°3: Interview guide for the teachers

- 1. Is English important to economics students?
.....
- 2. Which language skills do they need to develop?
.....
- 3. Do you have the impression that the training received could help them achieve?
.....
- 4. Could you make some suggestions for an improvement of ESP teaching and learning?
.....
.....