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Exams

Case Study of ESP Exams at the Department of Economics at Mouloud

Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou

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Dedications

To:

My respectable parents Farid and Ferroudja

My dear brothers Hichem, Hillal, Massi, Mayas

My lovely sister Assia

My fiancé Koceila and his family

My binomial in work and best friend Karima

All my friends, especially Kahina, Wissem,

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All my teachers and all those with whom I shared

enjoyable moments

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Abstract

The current investigation is an attempt to analyze the ESP exams in relation to sociolinguistic competence. It seeks to identify the different activities included in the ESP exams in the Department of Economics at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-ouzou in order to determine whether the exams of ESP test students' grammatical or sociolinguistic competence. In addition, this study goes further to uncover if these exams actually give an opportunity for learners to try out their language competence. To achieve this aim, this work relies on Canale and Swain's theory of sociolinguistic competence presented in their analytical framework of communicative competence (1980) as a theoretical plinth. For the sake of investigating the issue, the mixed-methods research is adopted. It combines quantitative and qualitative procedures of data collection and data analysis. It is based on analyzing a corpus made up of fifteen (15) ESP exams. In addition to the corpus, this study relies on a questionnaire administered to ten (10) teachers of ESP. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is used for the statistical data analysis of the closed-ended questions of the questionnaire whereas Content analysis has served to interpret the results of the open-ended questions as well as the corpus. The conclusion to be drawn from the findings of this study is that the ESP exams include tasks that focus more on grammatical competence rather than sociolinguistic competence. Therefore, they do not determine the students' actual level of performance in communication. Finally, a set of suggestions have been provided to improve the ESP exams.

Keywords*:* Sociolinguistic Competence, ESP exams, Canale and Swain's Framework.

List of Abbreviations

- ESP : English for Specific Purposes

- IELTS: International English Language Testing System

- L1: First Language

- L2: Second Language

- MMUTO : Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou

- NNS: Non Native Speakers

- QCA: Qualitative Content Analysis

- SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

- TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language

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General Introduction

- **Statement of the Problem**

Language testing has become a fundamental part of the learning / teaching process. Testing had traditionally been the tool that was most widely used by teachers to measure students' language abilities. Indeed, it can be conducted in various ways and with different approaches such as written exams, essays, oral exams, conversation between teacher and students and so on.

In the academic context, one issue which has been given little attention is *'testing in the field of English for Specific Purposes'* (ESP). ESP is an approach that has grown to become one of the most important areas of English language teaching. This approach has created a new generation of learners who are aware specifically why they are learning a language; therefore there is a need for testing ESP students who need proficiency in both language skills and their area of study. Thereby, testing has become necessary in ESP teaching.

ESP testing as Tratnik (2008) indicates has shown a slow but definite development over the past few years. Traditionally, different ESP tests have been designed mainly to assess students' ability to memorize grammatical structure and vocabulary. But, this ability is completely different from using English in real contexts. It is known that ESP teaching programs have always been aimed at developing students' skills of professional communication in English, no matter the area of their professional expertise. However, some linguists like Kramsh (2014) highlight the lack of such communicative skills among EFL learners regarding their level of linguistic knowledge. Consequently, many students may not communicate appropriately in simple cross-cultural contexts. More specially, learners may not be able to develop socio-cultural knowledge as much as grammatical knowledge of the language being learnt. In this respect, the question of Sociolinguistic Competence arises as to

the extent to which students can communicate effectively in various communicative situations. Yet, testing the learners' abilities in grammar through written tests may be simple but testing their abilities to communicate in the English language may seem more complex.

Different studies have already been done by students of the Department of English at MMUTO in the field of ESP like: the implementation of active learning during ESP lessons and attitudes and motivations towards ESP classes. From previous readings, it becomes noticeable that no study endeavored to tackle the issue of testing in ESP. This is why the present study seeks to fill this research void by investigating Sociolinguistic Competence in ESP exams in the Department of Economics at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou (MMUTO).

- **Aims and Significance of the Study**

Following the decreasing interest in sociolinguistic competence in testing ESP in higher education, the present study seeks to conduct a small-scale research in the Department of Economics at MMUTO on sociolinguistic competence in ESP exams. The study goes further to investigate what teachers of ESP really test? And if ESP exams call on the students to do activities which allow them to develop their sociolinguistic or their grammatical competence or both. By so doing, the study would be a first attempt to tackle this issue at the level of the aforementioned Department.

This study on sociolinguistic competence in ESP exams is significant for three reasons. First, it will shed light on what teachers of ESP base their exams when assessing students. Therefore, whether there is a need to stress more on sociolinguistic competence. Secondly, it is worth conducting this study because the key findings would help ESP test planners in designing appropriate tests in testing students' competence that fit the needs of the students and be aware of the area on which they should be tested. Also, it can be a guideline for students as they may be future teachers since it provides them with appropriate ways to

test students. Thus, they can make changes to their methods of testing. Lastly, this research study will also be valuable for other researchers in other institutions who would like to investigate the issue of testing in ESP.

- **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The present research aims at investigating sociolinguistic competence in ESP exams in the Department of Economics at MMUTO. To investigate such an issue, the following research questions are raised:

Q1: What are the different tasks used in the ESP exams in the Department of Economics at MMUTO?

Q2: Do teachers test students' grammatical or sociolinguistic competence in ESP exams?

Q3: Do ESP exams provide an opportunity for students to try out their language competence?

In an attempt to answer the aforementioned research questions, the following hypotheses are advanced:

H1: The different tasks that teachers use in ESP exams are completing dialogues and essays writing.

H2: Teachers test students' grammatical competence in ESP exams.

H3: Teachers test students' sociolinguistic competence in ESP exams.

H4: ESP exams provide an opportunity for students to try out their language competence.

H5: ESP exams do not provide an opportunity for students to try out their language competence.

- **Research Techniques and Methodology**

To better tackle the issue raised, this work adopts the mixed-methods research. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are combined for data collection and data analysis to answer the research questions and objectives. This study takes place during the second semester of 2016/2017 academic year with the participation of ten (10) teachers of the Department of Economics at MMUTO. In addition, in this study the necessary data are collected by analyzing fifteen (15) ESP exams from the same Department in order to obtain reliable information.   Also, this work makes use of questionnaire with both close-ended and open-ended questions that are administered to the teachers of English in the Department of Economics at MMUTO, who are considered as a good source for providing data relevant to the study. The data obtained from the questionnaire are analyzed quantitatively using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) as a statistical method of analysis. For the qualitative part, the data obtained from the ESP exams and the open-ended questions of the questionnaire are interpreted and explained by adopting Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA).

- **Structure of the Dissertation**

The overall structure of this dissertation follows the traditional-complex model. It consists of the "General Introduction", four chapters and the "General Conclusion".

The "General Introduction" presents the groundwork for the present study. It states its issue, its objectives, its research questions and hypotheses, its methodological design and the structure of the dissertation. The first chapter is entitled '*Review of the Literature'*, which reviews the key concepts related to the topic as well as the theoretical framework underlying the research study. The second chapter is named '*Research Design'* and it presents and explains the procedures of data collection and data analysis. The third chapter is '*Presentation of the Findings'*. It provides the results of gathered data and the analysis of the corpus. As regards the fourth chapter, it is called '*Discussion of the Findings'*. It endeavors to interpret

the results thus brings answers to the research questions set out at the onset of the investigation. Lastly, the "General Conclusion" provides a summary for the main points dealt throughout the study. Additionally, it proposes a number of suggestions for further research.

Introduction

This chapter is the review of the literature; it tackles the issue of testing in ESP as well as the sociolinguistic competence. For a better understanding of this study, it is worth to divide this chapter into four major parts. The first part offers a definition of testing and its main types. The second part tackles the concept of ESP as well as issues related to testing in ESP. The third part deals with the concept of sociolinguistic competence. Lastly, it presents Canale and Swain's theory of sociolinguistic competence that serves as a theoretical framework for the present work.

1.1. Testing

1.1.1. Definition of Testing

Testing has always been considered as the usual means of measuring learner's achievements. According to Brown (2003: 3) "a *test is a method of measuring a person's ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain"*. First, a test is a method, that is to say it is a set of explicit and structured procedures, techniques or items that require performance on the part of the test-taker, such as, multiple choice questions. Second, a test must measure. Tests are designed to measure whether general or specific abilities or competences. Finally, tests measure an individual's ability, knowledge, and performance. It is important for testers to understand who the test-takers are, and to consider their previous experience and background in the domain in which they are tested in order to measure their performance. In other words, tests measure to what extent the test taker is able to perform a given learning material, for instance, language tests measure one's ability to perform language. That is, to speak, write, read, or listen to a subset of language. In addition, Hughes (1989: 9) asserts that *"we use tests to obtain information"*. To put it another way, tests provide knowledge about students' performance, abilities, and their advancements in the learning, as well as details that

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may serve an appropriate and adequate teaching and learning operations. To sum up, testing is one of the powerful tools to measure learners' abilities as well as enhance their attitudes toward learning.

Language testing is an important stage in the process of language teaching and learning. According to Chapelle and Brindley (2010: 247) it is *"the act of collecting information and making judgments about a language learners' knowledge of a language and ability to use it"*. In simple terms, it is an instrument used by the teacher to know and evaluate the students' level and how they can perform a certain tasks.

1.1.2. Types of Tests

Language tests can be classified according to the type of information they provide. Also, each type of test has different kinds of purposes. There are different classifications of several types of tests described from many experts of language testing. The types of tests that will be reviewed in this study are proficiency tests, achievement tests, diagnostic tests, placement tests, direct tests and indirect tests.

1.1.2.1. Proficiency Tests

This kind of tests is defined by Arthur Hughes (1989: 9) as *"proficiency tests are designed to measure people's ability in language regardless of any training they may have had in that language"*. This means that, the content of these tests is not based on a course or syllabus that the test takers have followed. However, they are designed to measure their general skill or ability in language that is to say if they have language mastery, meaning the comprehensive knowledge or skill in a particular subject or activity. For him *"it is based on a specification of what candidates have to be able to do in the language in order to be considered proficient"* (ibid). In simple terms, the candidates are said to be proficient if they

are able to perform the language tasks required of them. Therefore, to say proficiency means showing good command of the four language skills; that is to speak, write, read, and listen without difficulty and effectively. The Cambridge International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is an Example of a proficiency test which is the world's most popular English test for higher education. It is designed to test the language ability of people who want to study where English is used as the language of communication. Educational institutions require IELTS test as part of their recruitment or admission procedures.

1.1.2.2. Achievement Tests

Achievement tests, contrary to proficiency tests are directly related to language courses, that is why they are also called '*syllabus based tests*' (Hughes, 1989:10). This kind of tests are designed to provide an indication of the extent to which the expected objectives of the program are being attained in order to determine the progress and diagnosing learner's weaknesses. According to Bachman (1990: 77) *"achievement assumes the attainment or the mastery of specific objectives"*. This means that achievement tests deal mainly with testing how successful learners have been in achieving what they have seen in classrooms. For example spelling tests and map quizzes are all examples of achievement tests. Each measures how well students can demonstrate their knowledge of a particular academic subject. Another example of achievement tests are those administered to students in elementary and secondary schools.

1.1.2.3. Diagnostic Tests

According to Hughes (1989: 13) "*Diagnostic tests are used to identify students' strengths and weaknesses*". That is to say, the information from this type of tests helps to depict the gaps and to set solutions. In this way, it is possible to diagnose the students who

need help in which areas of language by providing them with tasks and activities that diagnose a particular aspect of language. For instance, a diagnostic test in pronunciation might have the purpose of determining which particular phonological features of the language pose difficulty for a student.

1.1.2.4. Placement Tests

The term 'placement test' refers to the purpose for which it is used. For Jack C. Richards and Richard Schmidt (2010: 440) a placement test is a *"test that is designed to place test takers at an appropriate level in a program or course"*. For example international students applying for admission without providing any Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or other English proficiency test scores will take an English language placement test during orientation to place them in the particular level which fits their abilities. Said differently, placement tests typically include a sampling of material to be covered in the curriculum (that is, they have content validity), and they thereby provide an indication of the point at which the student will find a level or class to be neither too easy nor too difficult but to be appropriately challenging.

1.1.2.5. Direct Tests

According to Jack C. Richards and Richard Schmidt (2010:173) direct t*ests "measure ability directly by requiring test takers to perform tasks designed to approximate an authentic target language use situation as closely as possible"*. In simple terms, test-takers are asked to perform precisely and directly the skill to be measured, like testing the writing skill directly by asking the candidates to write an essay. Another example is testing students' reading skill by using real reading material and having the student respond to question verbally.

1.1.2.6. Indirect Tests

Jack C. Richards and Richard Schmidt (2010: 278) define indirect tests as *"a test that measures ability indirectly by requiring test takers to perform tasks not reflective of an authentic target language use situation"*. That is, indirect tests measure students' knowledge, abilities and performance by asking them to perform tasks that are related. Multiple choice questions are an example of indirect test which is considered an ideal test instruments for measuring students' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

1.1.3. Assessment and Testing

The terms testing and assessment are sometimes used to mean the same thing. However they are different as there are nuances between them**.** When doing assessment, the teacher tries to know how well students perform a certain task. It is sometimes used interchangeably with testing but it is different in its purpose behind collecting data. The gathered data are used *"[...] for the purpose of improving students learning and development"* (Cathrine et al, 1999:3). In other words, the collected information is used to see how much students are progressing in their learning.

Testing, on the other hand, is another measuring procedure which is defined by Brown and Kanjee (2006:9) as follows: *"Testing refers to the process of administering a test to measure one or more concepts usually under standardized conditions"*. This means that in testing, a series of questions are administered to students for the purpose of *"[...] analyzing the learners level and their degree of success in learning"*. (Zidane, 2010**:**6). So, testing is distinguished from assessment in the fact that it is one tool of assessment, while assessment includes, in addition to testing, other methods mainly the interview, the questionnaire, etc.

In the academic context, testing is used in various fields such as in language teaching, language tests are used to test students' knowledge and skills. ESP is an approach in language

teaching in which tests are used to measure students' language performance in specific domains.

1.2. English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

1.2.1. Definition of ESP

ESP is a very broad domain, referring mainly to teaching English to students or people who need it for specific purposes, it means at work, or in their future career. Therefore, it is associated with learner's specific needs. Many researchers have attempted different definitions of ESP: for example, Hutchinson and Waters (1987:12) argue that *"the purpose of ESP course is to enable learners to function adequately in the target situation"*. That is to say, the task of ESP teacher is to produce or follow a syllabus which gives a high priority to the appropriate language use that helps students to meet their needs in their specific field.

1.2.2. Developments of ESP

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) like any issue in applied linguistics did not appear suddenly but it went through many phases before it reached its present state. There are five main stages in the development of ESP, according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987): ***Register Analysis*** is the first term given to teaching courses for specific purposes. Since different specialities have different registers, for example, the register of Biology is unlike the one of Engineering, a call for courses to meet the learners' needs in each speciality is necessary. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), in this phase the main focus of the courses is on teaching the formal (grammatical and lexical) features that are needed in each register, which means teaching verb forms, nouns, phrases and vocabularies needed in the speciality (Richards 2001). However, register analysis fails to meet the needs since it deals with the language at the level of the sentence (Brunton 2009).

The weakness of register analysis has given birth to another stage which is ***Rhetorical or Discourse Analysis***. The focus of the new trend is on how sentences are combined to form paragraphs (Hutchinson and Waters (1987). Thus, the main points that are considered in this stage are the discourse patterns of different subject areas and the development of teaching materials on the basis of these patterns. Students, therefore, are expected to realize textual patterns and theoretical markers in a text which is set with respect to their field of study.

The third phase of ESP is ***Target Situation Analysis***. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) claim that, the whole point of Target Situation Analysis is to enable learners to meet their reason of learning. Thus, the primary purpose of ESP course is to help the learners to function effectively in a target situation. Before designing the course, teachers have to analyze the target situations or what is referred to as "needs analysis". This process of "needs analysis" is used by defining who are the learners, their goals, their experience levels and their attitudes towards English (Daniel, 2011).

The fourth phase of ESP is ***Skills-Centered*** **Approach**. Unlike the earlier three phases, this approach focuses on the underlying interpretive stages which enable learners to cope with the surface forms. This stage has been an attempt to look below the surface and to consider not the language but the thinking process that underline language use (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

The fifth phase of ESP is called ***Learner-Centered Approach***. For Hutchinson and Waters (1987), this stage aims to develop learner autonomy and independence by being responsible for their own learning. That is to say, in the ESP lessons learners need to be active to better acquire the knowledge and to be more motivated.

1.2.3. Testing in ESP

From the early 1960s, ESP has grown to become one of the most prominent areas of English language teaching. In addition to the emergence of ESP, a strong need for testing of specific groups of learners was created.

ESP testing is a relatively neglected area. Alderson and Waters (1983:41) write that *"only limited numbers of articles have been published in the area of ESP testing, but nowadays, there have been a lot of journals related to ESP testing"*. ESP tests are related in content, themes and topics to particular disciplines and involve a higher degree of language specificity. In this context, Dudley- Evans and St. John (1998:121) argue that *"assessment does not stand alone, but occupies a prominent place in ESP process and interact with learner's needs"*. From this quotation, we understand that assessment plays an important role in learning ESP and it is an aid of learning process.

Nevertheless, ESP testing is distinguishable from testing in general and language testing in particular as it targets specific purpose language abilities. Thus, if we want to know how well individuals can use language in specific context, the assessment or testing procedures need to include both their language knowledge and their use of strategic competence in relating the salient characteristics of the target language use situation to their specific purpose language abilities (Douglas, 2000:282).

1.2.4. Characteristics of ESP Tests

Language tests play a powerful role in many people's lives, acting as a gate ways at important transitional moments in education (MCNamara, 2000:4). As compared to general English test, which can be used with young learners (e.g. Cambridge Young Learners Tests) or adults (e.g. First Certificate in English), ESP tests are developed within an ESP context, aiming to comply with the narrowly defined requirement of any specific area of language use

and are more likely to be used with adults or secondary school learners at intermediate and advanced level or learners who have already acquired basic knowledge of language system.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987:146) claim that *"ESP tests are not exclusively employed to measure proficiency, but they may also be given to place students or to check their progress. In fact, these functions may even overlap in certain situations"*. In other words, the tests of ESP are not only designed to measure people's ability in language (proficiency tests) but also as placement and achievement tests.

Moreover, ESP tests are criterion-referenced tests, being designed to represent the candidate's level of ability, hence his/her performance is interpreted with reference to the criterion judged to be essential for proficiency in a particular task (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Douglas, 2000). Criterion-referenced tests mean tests which are designed to measure students' performance against a fixed set of predetermined criteria. For example asking students to write an essay to measure their abilities against some criteria such as vocabulary, punctuation, cohesion...etc .Thus, an ESP test calls for an interaction between the test taker's language ability and specific purpose content knowledge, on the one hand, and the tests' tasks on the other (Douglas, 2000: 19). Put differently, ESP learners' tests scores are reported and interpreted as reference to specific context domain or criterion of performance. For example, evaluating whether students have learned a specific body of knowledge or acquired a specific skill set, such us the curriculum taught in a course, academic program or content area.

1.3. Sociolinguistic Competence

1.3.1. Performance Vs Competence

The terms "Competence" and "Performance" are first proposed by Noam Chomsky as part of the foundation of his generative grammar. He distinguishes the system by which meaning is created from the way language is actually used in practice. He argues (1965:4)

"we thus make a fundamental distinction between competence (the speaker's knowledge of his language) and performance (the actual use of language in concrete situations)". That is to say, competence is the linguistic knowledge of the idealized native speaker, an innate biological function that allows the speaker to generate the infinite set of grammatical sentences that constitute a language. Whereas, performance refers to the real world linguistic output, in other words it is the actual use of language in concrete situations.

Later, Dell Hymes (1972) in reaction to Chomsky's notion of "linguistic competence" argues that Chomsky has omitted the linguistic ability referring to the production or use of utterances which are grammatically incorrect, but appropriate to the context or the situational and verbal context of the utterance. He emphasizes that the language user has another intuitive system in addition to the linguistic competence in which rules of grammar would be useless. So, he has introduced the concept of "communicative competence". Hymes' original idea is that speakers of a language need to have more than grammatical competence in order to be able to communicate effectively in a language; they also need to have the control of the principles of language usage. In simple terms, a language user needs to use the language not only correctly but also appropriately. For Hymes (1972: 277) *"a normal child acquires [...] competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner"*.

1.3.2. Communicative Competence

As far as classroom communication is concerned, Richards (1998:5-6) argues that learners need to develop competence in both the social and interactional aspects of classroom language, so that they could participate in classroom activities. All these aspects make up communicative competence. Bussmann (1995:208) defines communicative competence as *"the fundamental concept of paralinguistic model of linguistic communication*: *it refers to the*

repertoire of know-how that individuals must develop if they are to be able to communicate with one another appropriately in the changing situation and conditions".

Liamas, Mullany and Stockwell (2006:163) view that communicative competence is *"the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in different situations and for different purposes and audiences"* In other words; we can say that someone has a communicative competence if she/he is able to use appropriate language in different social situations.

Communicative competence embraces a number of abilities. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) in explaining Canale and Swain's theory of communicative competence, consider these abilities as prerequisites for any learner who wishes to become a truly effective communicator in another language. These abilities include the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (linguistic competence), the ability to use the appropriate form in the appropriate social situations (sociolinguistic competence), the ability to start, enter, contribute to, and end a conversation, and the ability to do this in a consistent and coherent manner (discourse competence, the ability to communicate effectively and use strategies to repair problems caused by communication breakdowns (strategic competence).

Furthermore, Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) understand communicative competence as a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skill needed for communication. In their concept of 'communicative competence', knowledge refers to the (conscious or unconscious) knowledge of an individual about language and about other aspects of language use. According to them (1980), there are three types of knowledge: knowledge of underlying grammatical principles, knowledge of how to use language in a social context in order to fulfil communicative functions and knowledge of how to combine utterances and communicative functions with respect to discourse principles. In addition, their

concept of skill refers to how an individual can use the knowledge in actual communication. According to Canale (1983), skill requires a further distinction between underlying capacity and its manifestation in real communication, that is to say, in performance. In this respect, Canale and Swain (1980&1983) respectively (cited in Omaggio Hadley,1993:6-7) break down communicative competence into four parts: (1) 'linguistics competence', which is the ability to use the linguistic code, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary correctly, (2) 'discourse competence', which means the ability to maintain cohesion between segments of discourse, (3) 'strategic competence', which refers to the learners' ability to repair communication breakdown and work gaps in his/her knowledge of the target language, and finally (4) 'sociolinguistic competence' ,which is the appropriate use of language in various social situations.

1.3.3. Definition of Sociolinguistic Competence

According to Elvira Koran (2016: 3) *"sociolinguistic competence is the knowledge of socio-cultural rules of use; i.e. knowing how to use and respond to language appropriately"*. That is to say, sociolinguistic competence is the ability to use language appropriately in different social situations depending on the setting, topic and participants of the communication.

1.3.4. Teaching Sociolinguistic Competence

There are two basic ways of introducing and teaching sociolinguistic competence. One of them is resorting to cultural models where students are explicitly or implicitly taught cultural elements ingrained in language use and/or integrating speech acts as situations where learners are forced to use language in consideration of socio-pragmatic factors such as social statues of the hearer, the degree of imposition, or the content of the request. Classroom environment may not be an appropriate context where sociolinguistic competence can be developed due to several reasons unique to any learning experience in an EFL context such as

non-authenticity of the content of the materials. For example, Izumi (1996) highlights that in developing sociolinguistic knowledge, most non-native speakers (NNS) who teach English experience challenges such as their own lack of knowledge, the existing curriculum requirements, the various teaching goals, student motivation, and evaluation procedures. These factors play a critical role in the process of learning how to use language in an appropriate way because the major concentration of most EFL learners is devoted to learning what the rules of language are and how they can produce grammatical sentences rather than how they can produce appropriate sentences that fit the specific social context.

Moreover, Omaggio (2001) highlights three main reasons why sociolinguistic competence is not often treated as a topic in its own right and as an indispensable aspect of language teaching: a) Language teachers often think that they do not have time for socio-cultural teaching due to time constraints in their curriculum. b) Teachers may not have enough confidence in believing that they can teach socio-cultural aspect of foreign language learning well. c) The teaching of socio-cultural competence often involves dealing with student attitudes which teachers usually find very challenging when trying to guide their students to understand and appreciate the logic and meaning of the target culture.

Similarly, Ya (2010) reports lack of context where students use language communicatively, but suggests that as most of foreign language learning occurs in the classroom setting, providing opportunities to use authentic and natural language seems to be difficult to achieve. He discusses several sources which impede learning and teaching of sociolinguistic competence. Among them is transfer from L1, which involves transferring of first language (L1) socio-cultural patterns into the second language (L2) sociolinguistic rules of language use, often due to the limited knowledge of sociolinguistic competence of L2.

1.4. Analytical Framework

As every research should rest on theoretical bases, the present research relies on the theory of "Sociolinguistic Competence" introduced by Michael Canale and Merrille Swain (1980) in their framework of communicative competence in the book entitled *"Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing"*. This framework is an approach to second language teaching, in which they assume that in order to achieve communicative competence; learners need to have some competences which are: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980).

In this present work, the focus is on sociolinguistic competence as our issue of investigation is to investigate sociolinguistic competence in ESP exams. This concept, which involves awareness of appropriate language use in different contexts, has been included as one of the major components of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980).

According to Canale and Swain (1980), sociolinguistic competence is the learners' ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts. In their view, Sociolinguistic Competence is made up of two sets of rules: socio-cultural rules of use and rules of discourse.

First, for Canale and Swain (1980) socio-cultural rules of use consist of the ways in which utterances are produced and understood appropriately with respect to the components of communicative events outlined by Hymes (1967,1968). In other words, socio-cultural rules mean producing and interpreting sentences that are appropriate to the different communicative situations by taking into account some factors such as: topic, participant, and situation. This is what Hymes (1974:52) calls "Speech event" that refers *to "activities, or aspects of activities, that are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech"*. Put differently, each communicative situation is governed by specific rules of language use, meaning that there are different rules that are used depending on the context of the communication. For example,

speech event such as a conversation with a teacher would have rules of use associated with it that differ from those associated with a conversation with a friend.

In addition, Canale and Swain (1980:30) claim that these rules have two focuses. The primary focus of these rules is on the extent to which certain propositions and communicative functions are appropriate with a given socio-cultural context depending on contextual factors such as topic, role of participants, setting, and norms of interaction. That is to say, there are certain language functions like request, apologize, order, etc. that are appropriate in different social context. A secondary concern of such rules is the extent to which appropriate attitude and register or styles are conveyed by a particular grammatical form within a given socio-cultural context. Put differently, variations of language use are expressed by a specific grammatical form depending on different context or groups.

The second type of rules that help learners to interpret the social meaning of utterances are the rules of discourse. Canale and Swain (1980) say that until a clear theory of discourse is evolved, such rules mean cohesion and coherence of groups of sentences. The former (cohesion) refers to the grammatical links and the latter (coherence) refers to the appropriate combination of communicative functions. In simple terms, it is the use of words and phrases that fit a particular setting and topic, and the use of specific attitudes as courtesy, authority, respect, etc when needed. Moreover, Canale and Swain (1980) added that there is not a clear difference between rules of discourse and grammatical rules regarding cohesion and socio-cultural rules regarding coherence. Yet, they (1980:30) argue that:

> The focus of rules of discourse in our framework is the combination of utterances and communicative functions and not the grammatical well-formedness of single utterances or the socio-cultural appropriateness of a set of propositions and communicative functions in a given context.

That is to say, the rules of discourse do not focus on the grammatically correct sentences as well as on a set of propositions and communicative functions that are appropriate

to a particular communicative situation, but rather on how sentences and communicative functions are combined.

To sum up sociolinguistic competence is concerned with knowing how to use and respond to language appropriately, given the topic, setting, and the relationship among the people communicating. It is made up of two sets of rules: socio-cultural rules and rules of discourse. For Canale and Swain the knowledge of these rules is necessary in interpreting utterances for social meaning.

Conclusion

In this chapter, a theoretical overview on the literature that is dealt with ESP testing and sociolinguistic competence has been provided. It is divided into three main parts. The first part has provided a definition of testing, its main types, and its relation to ESP. The second part has concerned with the issue of sociolinguistic competence. The last part has explored the theoretical framework.

Introduction

This chapter deals with the research design of the present study. It describes the research techniques used to investigate sociolinguistic competence in ESP exams in the Department of Economics at MMUTO in order to answer the research questions stated in the general introduction.

The first part provides a descriptive account of the corpus and the participants of the study as well as the instrument used to gather other data namely a *'questionnaire'*. The second part explains the procedures of data analysis. The data obtained from the closed-ended questions of the questionnaire are analysed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). While, the data derived from the open-ended questions of the questionnaire and the corpus are analysed using the Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA).

2.1. Participants

This study is carried out with the participation of ten (10) teachers of English in the Department of Economics at MMUTO. It takes place during the second semester of 2016/2017 academic year.

2.2. Corpus of the Study

The research study relies on the analysis of a corpus made up of fifteen (15) ESP exams in the Department of Economics at MMUTO. The ESP exams are selected randomly from different years and contain 77 activities.

2.3. Procedures of Data Collection

In this study, the mixed-methods approach, which represent research that involves collecting, analysing and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in a series of studies that investigate the same underlying phenomenon. (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008) has been adopted in order to gather the appropriate data. In fact, this method is based on the combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods using one main tool for the sake of collecting data. This tool consists of a *'questionnaire'*.

2.3.1. Questionnaire to Teachers

In addition to the corpus, another type of data gathered by means of a questionnaire is used. According to Dorney (2003), a questionnaire is *"one of the most popular instruments applied to social sciences. It is easy to construct, extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information"*.

The designed questionnaire which is distributed to ten (10) teachers of ESP in the Department of Economics at MMUTO comprises fifteen (15) items with two kinds of questions: *'Closed-ended'* questions which require choosing the information from a range of pre-determined alternative responses, and *'open-ended'* questions where respondents answer freely using their own words.

The questionnaire is made up of four sections. The first one deals with teacher's profile. The second section contains questions about teacher's background of ESP and sociolinguistic competence. Regarding the third section, it is concerned with the teacher's strategies in teaching ESP. The last one consists of questions related to teacher's attitudes towards testing EPS.

2.4. Procedures of Data Analysis

2.4.1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

To carry out this study, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is adopted as a quantitative data analysis procedure, which is a user-friendly software used for the manipulation, the statistical analysis and the presentation of the numerical data obtained from the closed-ended questions of the questionnaire. The SPSS is a powerful, computer software that is particularly used by students and teachers in behavioral sciences; it provides techniques and methods for entering and processing a variety of data which can be used to carry out statistical analysis (Landau & Everitt, 2004). Lastly, SPSS can be used to calculate descriptive statistics, record data, create graphs and charts, and so on.

2.4.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

Regarding the qualitative data procedure for the analysis of data gathered from the corpus and the open-ended questions of the questionnaire, the present study uses a Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). Hsieh and Shannon (2005: 1278) define QCA as *"a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns"*. To put another way, it is a widely used research method to analyse data by defining categories and outlining a coding process then analysing the results of the coding process. The data might be verbal, printed, or electronic and might be obtained from open-ended questions, interviews, books or print media (Kondracki and Wellman, 2002). For Downe-Wamboldt (1992:314) the main goal of QCA is *"to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study"*. This implies that QCA goes beyond simply counting words to examining language intensely in texts (Weber, 1990).

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) identify three distinct approaches to QCA: Conventional,

Summative, and Directed. In Conventional Content Analysis coding categories are derived directly from the text data. It is generally used with a study whose aim is to describe a phenomenon (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). In the words of Hsieh and Shanon (2005:1279) *"this type of design is usually appropriate when existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited researchers avoid using predetermined categories"*. Unlike Conventional Content Analysis, the Directed one is an approach where researchers use preconceived categories which are guided by a theory or a relevant research finding. Hickey and Kipping (1996) assert that *"Content Analysis using a directed approach is guided by a more structured process than in a conventional approach"*. The goal of a Directed Content Analysis is to validate or extent conceptually a theoretical framework or a theory (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). For Hsieh and Shannon a Summative Content Analysis (2005:1977) *"involves counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by interpretation of the undelying context"*. The goal of this analysis is to discover underlying meanings of the words or the content.

This study opts for the Qualitative Content Analysis for the analysis of the data obtained from the open-ended questions of the questionnaire. Furthermore, since the goal of the present research is to identify whether ESP teachers in the Department of Economics at MMUTO use sociolinguistic competence while testing their students, therefore the Directed Content Analysis is used for the analysis of the corpus made up of fifteen (15) ESP exams. The theory of Sociolinguistic Competence introduced by Michael Canale and Merrile Swain in their framework of Communicative Competence will serve as predetermined categories to be looked for in the corpus.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the research methodology used to investigate sociolinguistic competence in ESP exams in the Department of Economics at MMUTO. The first part has dealt with the description of both the participants and the corpus of the present study. The second part has described the data collection instrument. Lastly, the third one has dealt with the presentation of the data analysis procedures.

Introduction

This chapter aims at presenting the different findings through the analysis of fifteen (15) ESP exams of the Department of Economics at MMUTO. Additionally, the results that have emerged from the data elicited from a questionnaire administered to ten (10) teachers of the same Department. For the sake of visibility and readability, the results are converted into statistics, tabulated and displayed through various histograms and pie-charts. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first part deals with the results obtained from the analysis of the ESP exams relying on Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) and Canale and Swain's framework. Section two is devoted to the presentation of the findings of the questionnaire processed through the SPSS software.

3.1 Presentation of the Results of the ESP Exams

The outcomes that have been yielded from the analysis of the corpus, made up of fifteen (15) exams in relation to Sociolinguistic Competence which includes (77) activities, are presented in the following tables. These exams have been analyzed through Canale and Swain's theory of Sociolinguistic Competence introduced in their theoretical framework of Communicative Competence. Hence, the components that make up this theory have been detected and quantified in each test as displayed in the tables below.

3.1.1. Tasks Concerning Grammatical Competence in the ESP Exams

The first table deals with the presentation of the results concerning Grammatical Competence, by providing examples.

Competence	Subcategories	Number of activities	Percentages %
Grammatical	▪ Morphology	55	71.43%

Competence	Syntax		
	Semantics		
	Vocabulary		
Example	o **Put the following verbs into the correct form:** -People and companies should be able (to buy) goods from all countries, without any barriers when they (to cross) frontiers. -Countries (to rise) their living standards and income if they specialize in the production of the goods and services in which they (to have) the highest relative productivity. -Many governments (to impose) tariffs or import taxes on good from abroad, to make them more expensive and (to encourage) people to buy local products. (English Exam, September 2017)		

Table 1: Grammatical Competence in the ESP Exams

3.1.2. Tasks Concerning Sociolinguistic Competence in the ESP Exams

After having dealt with the presentation of the results about grammatical competence in ESP exams, the following table illustrates the occurrences of sociolinguistic competence.

Competence	Subcategories	Number of activities	Percentages %
Sociolinguistic Competence	Communicative functions Situational dialogues Cohesion	19	24.68%

	• Coherence
Example	○ **Complete the following dialogue** **A.** ………………………………………………………………. **B.** It is a message meant to promote a product or an idea. **A.** …………………………………………………………… **B.** We can find advertising everywhere. **A.** …………………………………………………………… **B**. Manufactures, businessmen politicians; almost everyone uses it. **A**. …………………………………………………………… **B.** Yes, of course. Advertising is a big business (English Exam, September 2017)

Table 2: Sociolinguistic Competence in the ESP Exams

3.1.3. Tasks Concerning Both Grammatical and Sociolinguistic Competences in the ESP Exams

As regards to the activities involving both the Sociolinguistic and the Grammatical Competences, the results are to be presented in the following table with providing an example from the corpus under analysis.

Competence	Subcategories	Number of activities	Percentage s %
Grammatical and Sociolinguistic Competence	• Both	3	3.90%
Example	Summarize the text into a short paragraph of no more than 5 lines (English Exam, February 2017)		

Table 3: Grammatical and Sociolinguistic Competences in the ESP Exams

3.1.4. Description of the Results of the ESP Exams
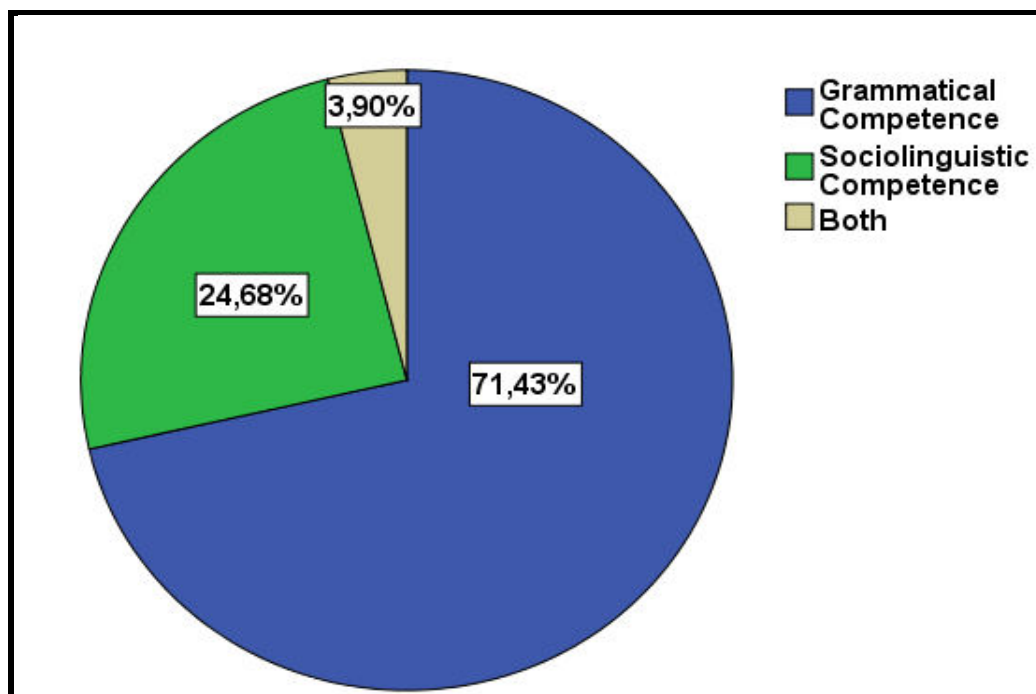
Diagram 1: The Results of ESP Exams

All of the activities included in the ESP exams have been analyzed relying on Canale and Swain's theory of Sociolinguistic Competence included in their theoretical framework of Communicative Competence. As highlighted in diagram 1 above, the results obtained through this analysis indicate that the Grammatical Competence exceeds the rest of the competences with a percentage of (71.43%). In addition, the analyses have shown that some of the activities focus on Sociolinguistic Competence with a percentage of (24.68%). Finally, a minority of the activities focus on both Grammatical and Sociolinguistic Competences with a percentage of (3.90%).

3.2. Presentation of the Result of the Questionnaire

This second part deals with the presentation of the findings which have been obtained from the analysis of the questions included in the questionnaire. All the responses collected

from closed-ended questions have been processed through the SPSS software in the form of diagrams and pie-charts by showing all numbers and percentages, whereas open-ended questions have been analysed through QCA.

Q1. How would you define English for Specific Purposes (ESP)?

All the participants (10/10) maintain that ESP is concerned with teaching and learning the specialized English language to meet the specific needs of the learners. In addition, some teachers add that *"ESP is different from General English"* because it is the teaching of specific language (such as: business language, technical language, English for tourism).

Q2. How would you define Sociolinguistic Competence?

Six (6/10) teachers have answered that sociolinguistic competence is the ability or the capacity of the learners to use appropriate language in different contexts. For example one teacher has answered that sociolinguistic competence is *"the ability to communicate efficiently according to the needs of any social group"*. Whereas, four (4/10) are not aware of the concept of 'sociolinguistic competence" because they did not give an appropriate definition of the term. For example, one has said that *"it is related to language form and it is related to grammatical structure"*

Q3. In your opinion, what competence do students need to learn ESP?
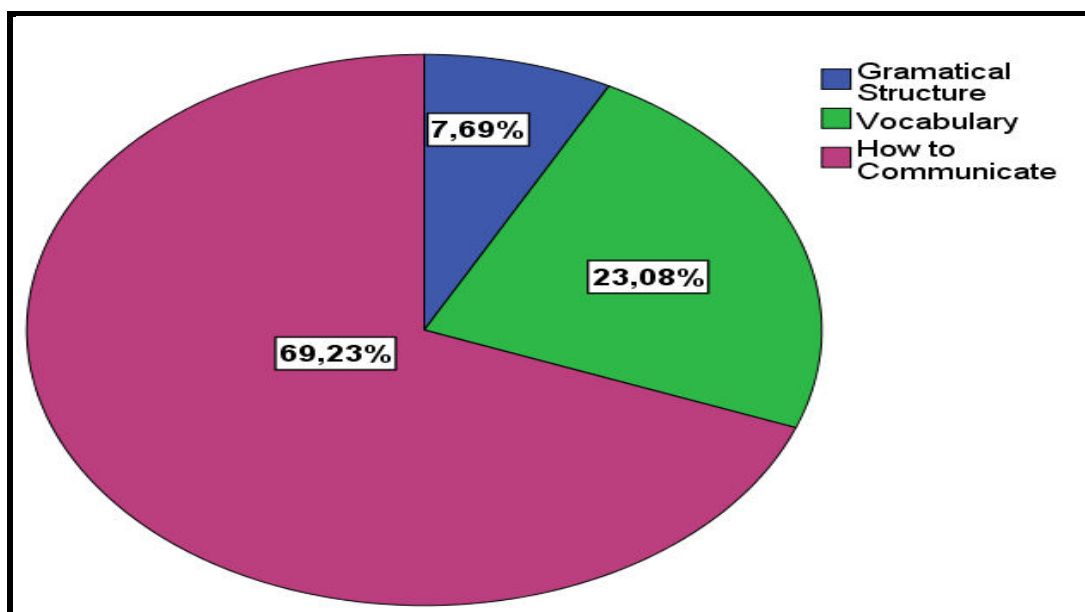
Diagram 2: Competences Needed in Learning ESP

As illustrated in the diagram above, the majority of the respondents that is (69.23%) which stand for nine (9) teachers have affirmed that students need to learn how to communicate. (23.08%) which represent three (3) teachers have claimed that students in ESP need to learn vocabulary. Only (7.69%) of the respondents corresponding to one teacher has claimed that students need to learn grammatical structure.

Would you explain why?

The teachers, who have answered that students need to learn how to communicate, have explained that they will use it in different contexts and work places to interact with people in the same domain. On the other hand, teachers who have answered that learners need to learn vocabulary have justified their answers by saying that in order to use English language in specific domain, they should know the new specific vocabulary or terminology. While the teacher who has answered that students need to learn grammatical structure has justified that if students do not know the form of language, they cannot use it appropriately in different situations.

Q4.While students learn ESP, they face the following difficulties:
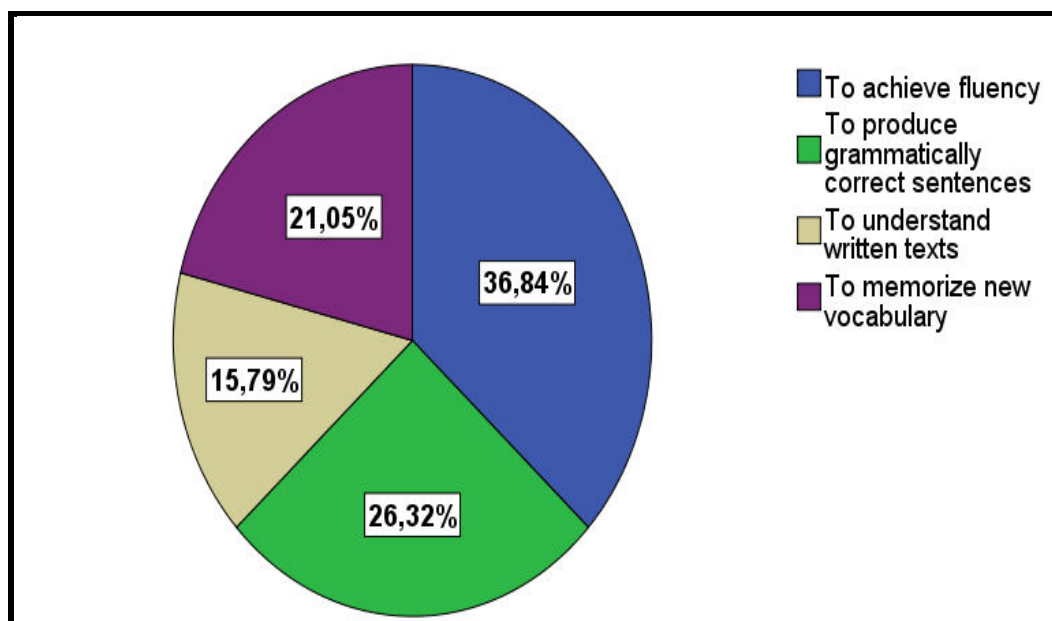
Diagram 3: Students' Difficulties while Learning ESP.

The findings related to students' difficulties indicate that (36.84%) of them face the difficulty to achieve fluency. While some students who represent (26.32%) face the problem of producing grammatically correct sentences, others (21.05%) face the difficulty of memorizing new vocabulary. As regards the students who represent (15.79%) they have the problem with understanding written texts.

Q5. What do you think is more important in teaching ESP?
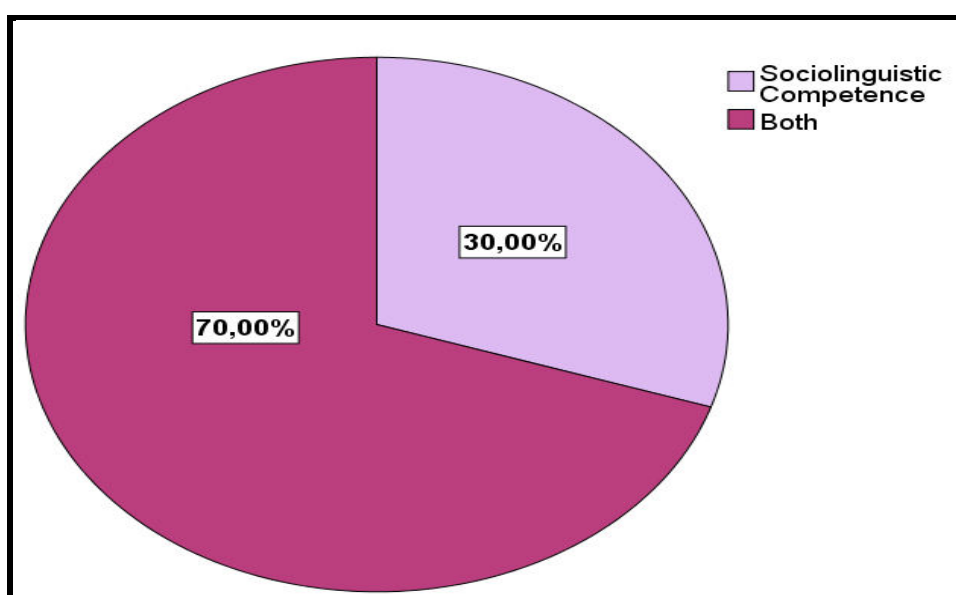
Diagram 4: The Important Competences in Teaching ESP.

The statistics in diagram 4 indicate that the majority (70%) of the respondents give importance to both competences while teaching ESP. Other teachers namely thirty-percent (30%) give more importance to sociolinguistic competence.

Q6. What do you teach your students in ESP?
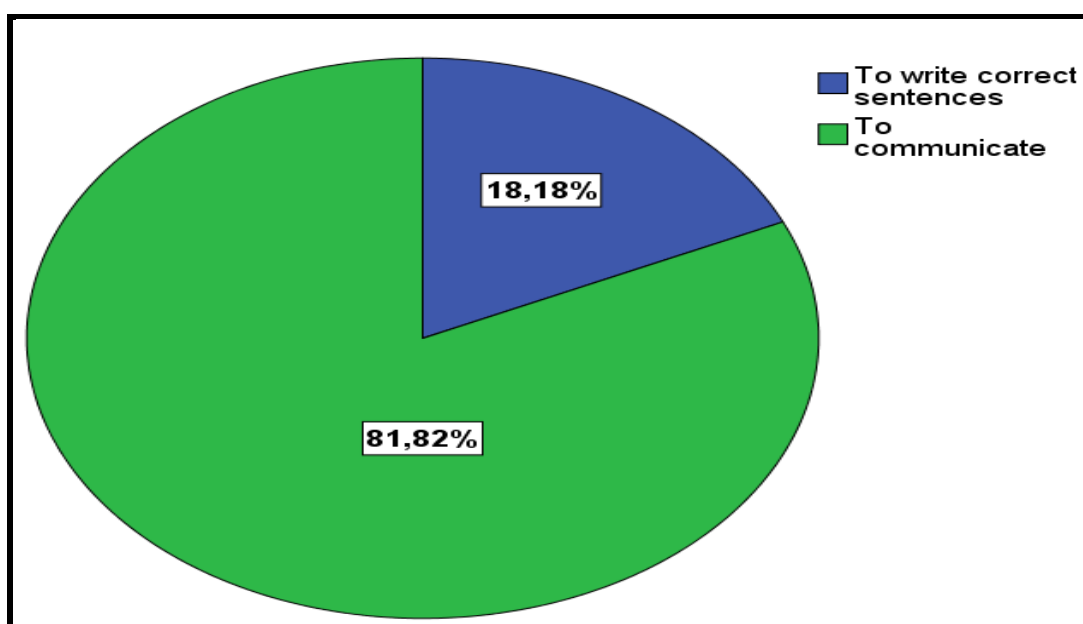
Diagram 5: Teachers' Teaching Content in ESP

As shown in diagram 5, most of the teachers (81.82%) teach students to communicate. While the rest who represent (18.18%) teach students how to write correct sentences.

Q7. Do you think that the target language culture may affect the learning process?
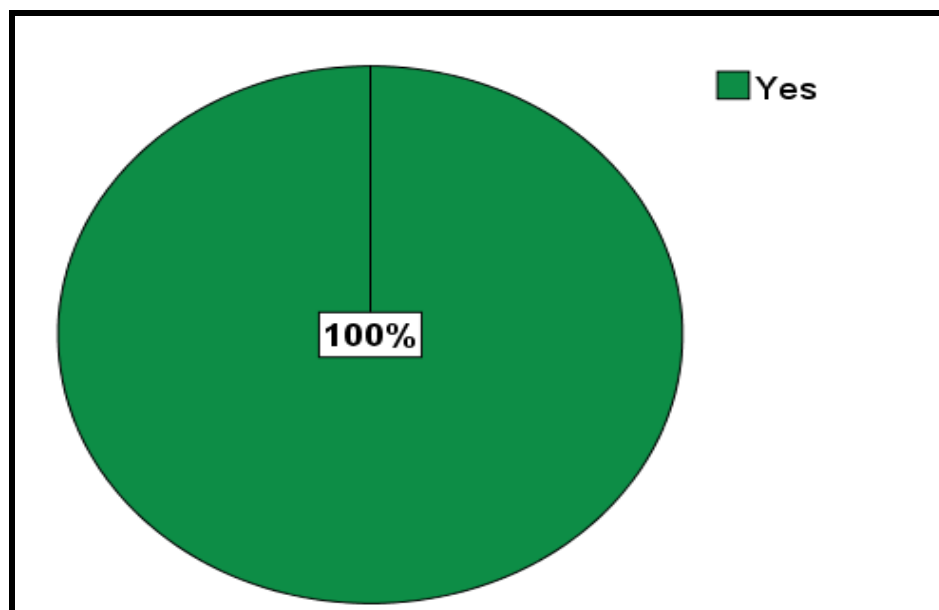
Diagram 6: The Effect of Target Language Culture on the Learning Process

From the diagram above, it is clear that all the respondents (10/10) who represent (100%) have affirmed that the target language culture affect the learning process.

If yes, how?

All the respondents (10/10) have agreed that it is important to learn the target language culture to achieve the goal of communication because culture and language cannot be separated. Some teachers have answered that learning the grammatical forms is not sufficient. So, all the language learners must know the culture from which the language comes because it is part of culture. While others have maintained that culture is transmitted through language.

Q8. The main goal (s) of your ESP program:
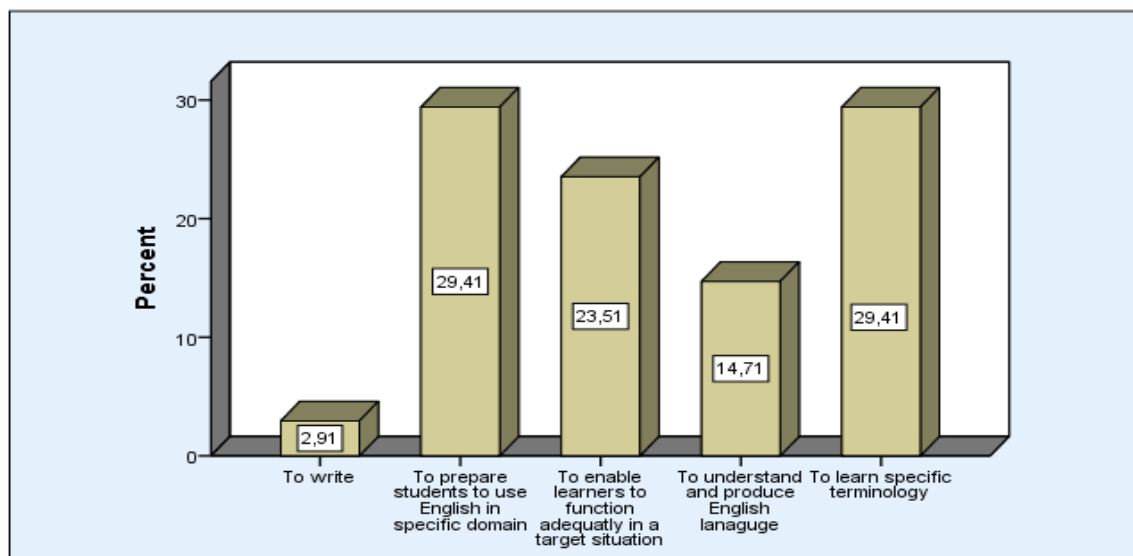
Diagram 7: The Main Goals of ESP Programs

As displayed in diagram 7, both the goals: "learning specific terminology" and to "prepare students to use English in specific domain" have the same percentage which is (29.41%). It is followed by "to enable learners to function adequately in a target situation" with a percentage of (23.52%). Whereas, the goal of understanding and producing English language, rank third with a percentage of (14.70%). Only (2.94%) of the teachers which represents one teacher has answered that the main goal of his/her ESP program is "to write". None of the teachers have answered the main goal of their ESP program is "to develop reading skill".

Q9. My students practise the following tasks in classroom:
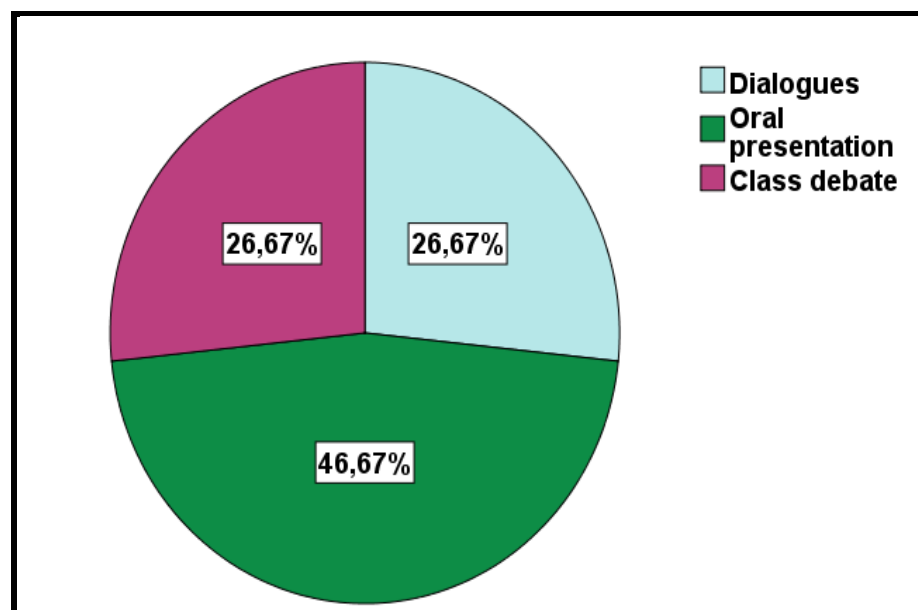
Diagram 8: ESP Tasks Practised in the Classroom

The diagram above highlights that the majority of the respondents that is (46.67%) which stands for seven (7) teachers have affirmed that they use oral presentation in the classroom. In contrast, (26.67%) is the percentage corresponding to teachers who use both dialogues and class debate in the classroom.

Q10. In order to use English for Specific Purposes appropriately in different situations (e.g. business companies), what are the abilities that students need to master:

Most of the teachers (8/10) have maintained that the abilities that students need to master in order to use English for Specific Purposes in different situation is the ability to understand and to communicate effectively in different work places. Three teachers (3) have asserted that students need to master the writing skill. However, others have claimed that learners need to master new specific vocabulary or terminology.

Q11. What do you test in ESP?
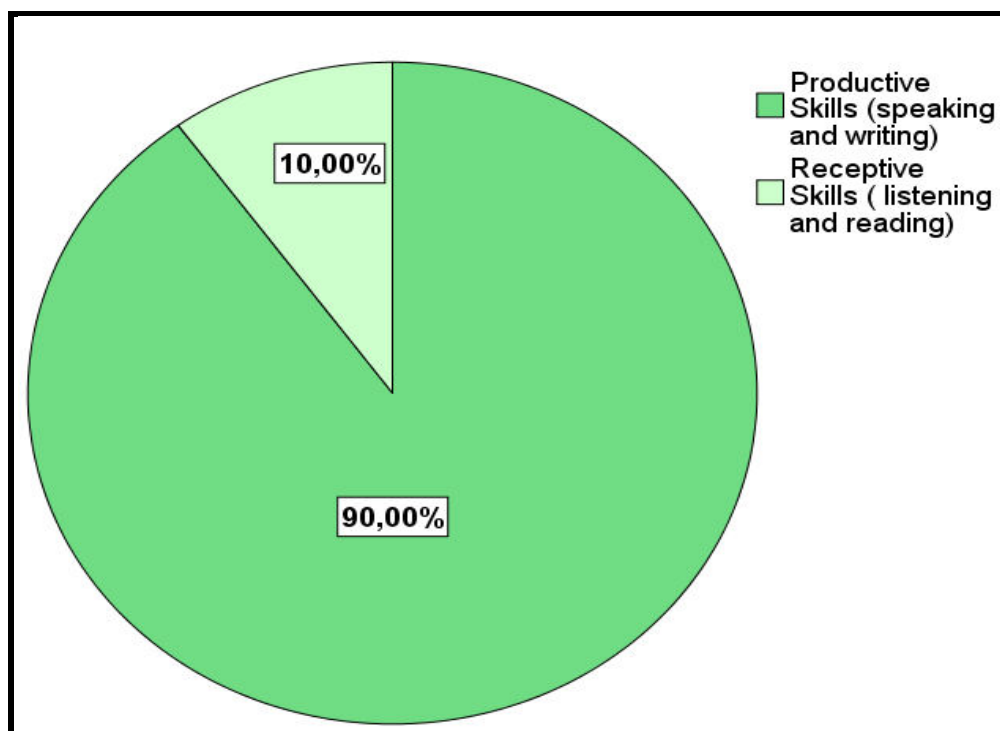
Diagram 9: Testing Language Skills in ESP

It appears from this diagram that the majority that is (90%), corresponding to (9) teachers have answered that they test the productive skills (speaking and writing) skills. While, one (1) teacher with a percentage of (10%) has answered that s/he tests the receptive skills (listening and reading).

Would you explain your choice?

The teachers who have answered that they test productive skills have justified by saying that they are essential for effective communication since this is the goal of ESP program. Others have justified that the focus is on productive skills because ESP classes are mainly designed to teach students how to use language, that is, to produce written texts and oral discourse. However, the teacher who has answered that s/he tests receptive skills has explained that learners need to understand written texts and conversation while interacting with others.

Q12. In your opinion, what is more important in testing ESP?
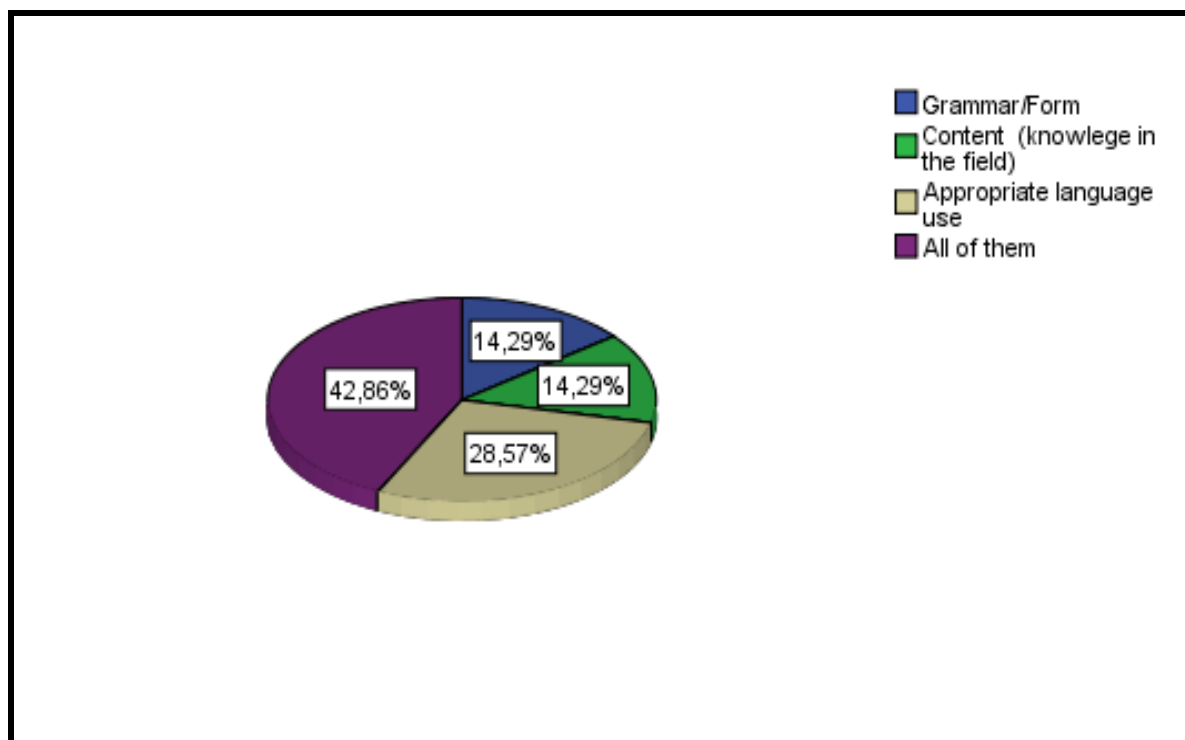
Diagram 10: Teachers' Testing in ESP

From the above pie chart, the majority of the teachers (60%) have answered that "content (knowledge in the field)" is more important in testing ESP, while the minority with the percentage of (10%) which represent one teacher has answered that grammar is more important than something else. Whereas, others have answered that both: grammar and the knowledge in the field are important.

Q13. "The aim(s) of testing ESP are:"
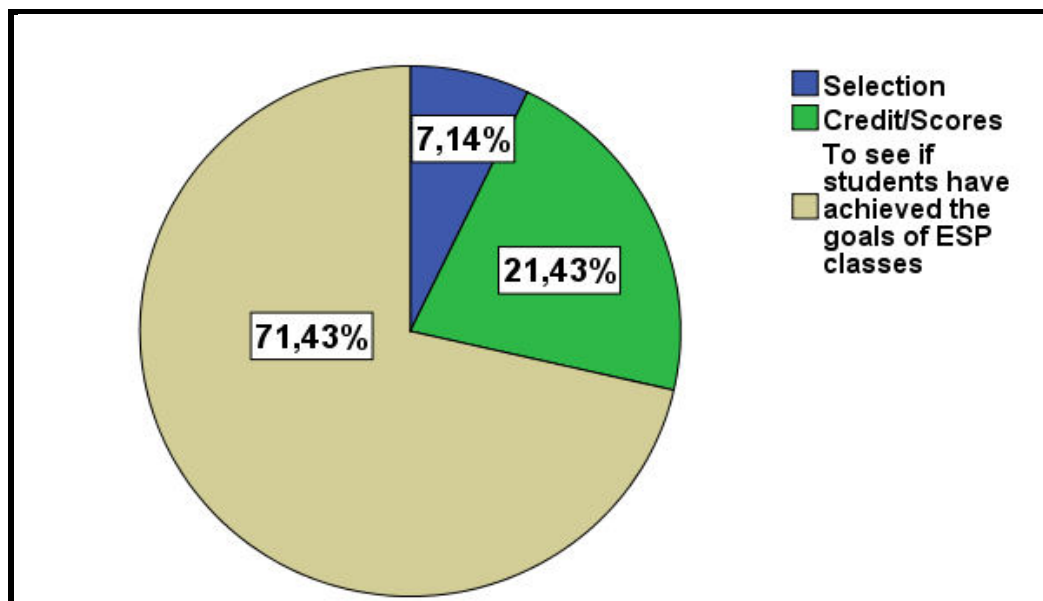
Diagram 11: Teachers' Aim in Testing ESP

The pie chart highlights that the majority of the teachers with a percentage of (71.43%) have answered that their aim in testing ESP is to see if students achieve the goals of ESP classes. Twenty one point forty three percent (21.43%) of the respondents have stated that their aim of testing ESP is to score students' performance. While, the minority of them (7.14%) have affirmed that the main goal of testing ESP is to select the students who will pass to the next semester.

Q14. In ESP tests, the students are asked to answer the following task(s):
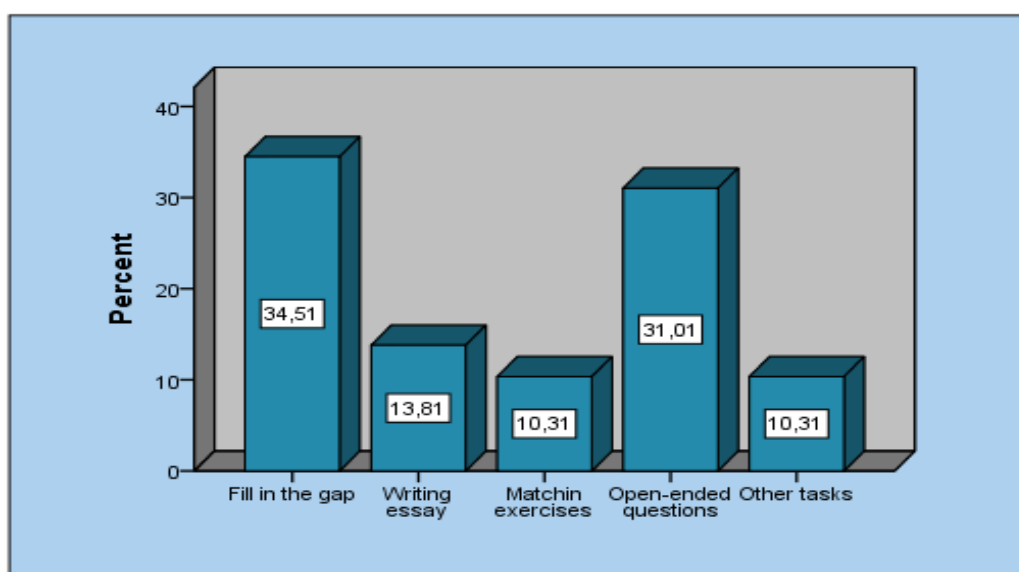
Diagram12: The Different Tasks in ESP Exams.

Diagram 12 presents the different tasks that students are asked to answer in ESP tests. It clearly shows that (34.51%) of the teachers answered that the students in ESP tests are asked to do activities of "fill in the gap" followed by "open-ended questions" with the percentage of (31.01%). While in some ESP tests, students are asked to write essays which represent (13.81%). Other teachers (10.31%) have stated that learners are asked to do "matching exercises", while some others (10.31%) have maintained that students in ESP tests do other tasks.

Q15. Indirect tests do not provide an opportunity for students to try out their language competence in realistic communication situations
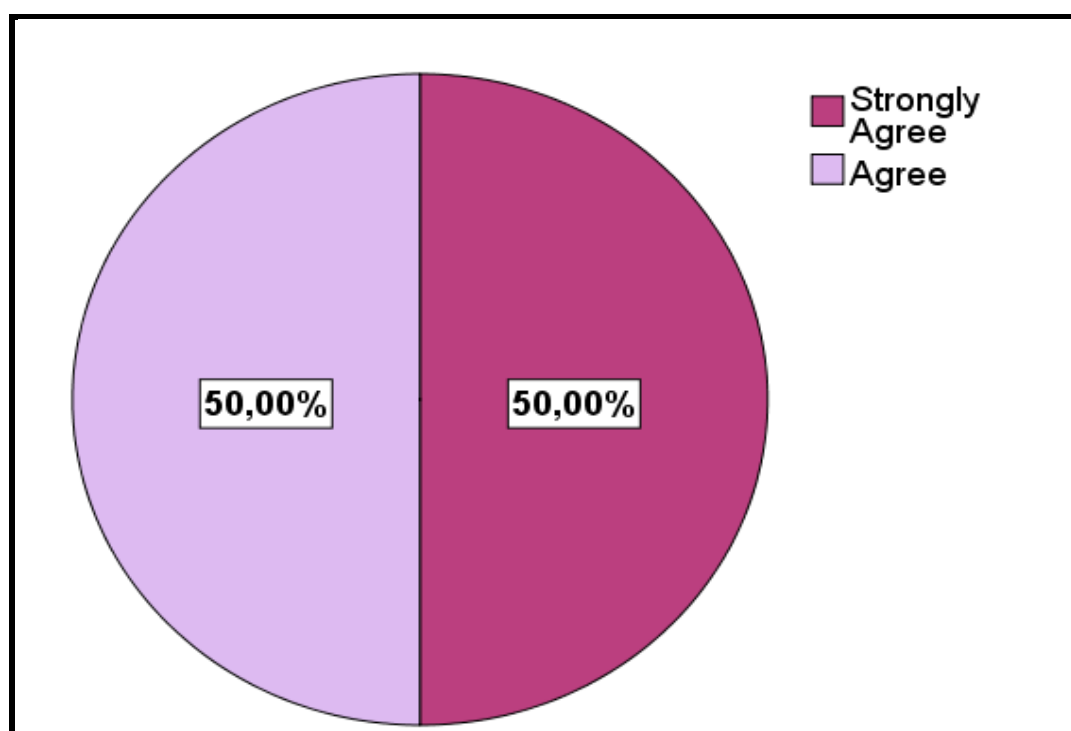
Diagram 13: Teachers' Point of View about Indirect Tests

The results presented in diagram 13 show that all the respondents who represent (100%) i.e. (50%+50%) have agreed that indirect tests do not provide an opportunity for students to try out their language competence in realistic communication situations.

Would you explain your choice?

Some teachers have justified by saying that they agree, because indirect tests do not test what should be tested and if the teachers need to test students in any skill, they should give them precise tasks in the skill itself. Others have justified that indirect tests are more related with writing than speaking, so learners can not engage in real communication.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the presentation of the findings with relation to Sociolinguistic Competence that have been reached through the analysis of the corpus and the answers of the questionnaire. Thus, for a better understanding of the findings, tables, graphs and diagrams have been used. The results obtained will be discussed and interpreted in the next chapter in an attempt to bring answers raised in the General Introduction.

Introduction

The last chapter in this research is devoted to the discussion as well as the interpretation of the findings obtained from the analysis of the corpus and the questionnaire. It is to be remembered that the primary goal of this research is to check if the ESP exams focus on sociolinguistic or grammatical competence or both. Dealing with this analysis and relying on Canale and Swain's framework, we aim at answering the research questions stated in the General Introduction. The chapter comprises three major sections. The first section deals with the different tasks used by the teachers in the ESP exams. Section two is devoted to teachers' testing of grammatical and sociolinguistic competences. As regards section three, it discusses the learners' opportunities to try out their language competence through the ESP exams.

4.1. The Different Tasks used by ESP teachers in the ESP Exams

The results of the questionnaire indicate that most of the teachers of the Department of Economics base their ESP exams on activities of *'fill in the gap'* and *'open-ended questions'*. This is noticeable by the answers provided by the teachers, which are displayed in the results section (See diagram 6). In addition to the results of the questionnaire, the findings from the analysis of ESP exams support the teachers' answers, so that the learners are asked to *'fill in the gap'* more than other tasks. These findings seem to be different from what Carroll (1980:59) says that in ESP, we are going to test *"the ability to perform appropriate communicative operations requiring specified language skills and insights in specified subject areas"*. From the quotation given by Carroll, we can deduce that ESP teachers at the Department of Economics do not provide the learners with more activities that allow them to test their communicative competences such as dialogues. So, the teachers test more the learners' understanding of grammatical rules (grammatical Competence).

Moreover, according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987:18) *"ESP is not a matter of sciences words and grammar for scientist […]. In the same way, there is much more to communication than just the surface features that we read and hear"*. So, in ESP the teachers should design activities that support learners' needs and which allow them to have both: knowledge in grammar and appropriateness of language use. Further, Basturkmen (2010: 8) supports this point asserting that "*[…] in an ESP situation, it is understood that the learner would want to achieve 'real world' objectives, objectives requiring specific competences"*.

4.1.1. Tasks Concerning Grammatical Competence in ESP Exams

After analysing the ESP exams, tasks which are related to grammatical competence are found in all of the ESP exams. The following activities are taken from different ESP exams as illustrations:

Exercise C: put the verbs to the correct form.

I usually .... (to play) tennis, but in winter I .... (to find) some difficulties. I always .... (to tell) myself that if I .... (to be) the mayor, I .... (to build) a large covered court for tennis. When I .... (to be) in London mainly in 2008, I first .... (to join) the swimming club then I .... (to discover) a passion for myself, tennis. I .... (to be) happy with this.

(English exam, 2017)

In this task, the learners are asked to apply the grammatical rules that are needed to make a grammatically correct paragraph by putting the verbs to the correct forms. Here, the ESP teachers aim at testing the learners' capacity to apply the different rules that they have been taught in the class. In fact, this activity does not require the students to solve a problem in a specific situation that is, to use their communicative competence in different contexts. In addition, the following activity is another example:

2- Complete the following chart as shown in the example.

Verb	Noun	Adjective
To advice	Advertisement	Advertised
....	Product	....
To sell	....	....
....	....	Useful

This task asks the learners to give appropriate verbs; nouns and adjectives that they think will fit each word. It turns around *"vocabulary"* which is a sub-category of *"grammatical competence"*. More importantly, it is the students' knowledge about word-formation and vocabulary which are tested.

D- Fill in the gaps with: *jobs – have – problems – recent – some – varied – productive – with – many – make – claim – is.*

In ....years, ...countries of the world...........been faced...........the...........of how to...........their workers more........... *...........Experts..........the answer..........to make..........more.......... .*

The learners' task in this case is to fill the gaps with the missing words in order to have a meaningful paragraph. This activity bases on the students' understanding and knowledge of the vocabulary. Here, the teachers aim at testing the ability of the learners to write correct sentences that is to test their grammatical competence.

After having dealt with tasks concerning grammatical competence, the following part is devoted to the discussion of tasks related to sociolinguistic competence.

4.1.2. Tasks Concerning Sociolinguistic Competence in ESP Exams

D- Complete the following dialogue.

A: ....
B: It is the amount of money investors will need in order to start a business.
A: ....
B: In this case they refer to banks to get loans to finance their business.
A: ....
B: In exchange the banks loans must be paid back with interest.
A: ....

B: The banks before lending money to the investor have to make sure that he has some asserts that they can turn into cash in case the business fails.

(English Exam, 2017)

As we notice, the students in this case are faced with an activity which principally involves production, what is called *'situational dialogue'* which is a sub-category of *'sociolinguistic competence'.* Here, the students are asked to complete the dialogue in order to test their language production and creativity, and to see how they can use language in a specific topic. So, the students are asked to use their communicative competences.

1) Read the text then answer the following questions using your own words:

a. Give a title to the text.
b. What is the objective of HR policy in an enterprise?
c. Why are HR policies and plans so important?
d. What does an HR manager need in order to understand the HR policy?

(English Exam, February 2017)

This type of question calls on the learners to respond to questions about the text. That is to say, their answers depend on their understanding and comprehension of the text, as well as, on intellectual abilities to comprehend what the questions mean in order to give the right answer. In fact, learners should show their capacities in reading which allow them to have access to the meaning of different texts in different contexts. So, in this activity, the teachers' aim is to test students' sociolinguistic competence to know if the learners are able to use appropriate language in answering the questions in a specific context.

As it is shown in the presentation of the findings, some activities in the ESP exams focus on both grammatical and sociolinguistic competences. In other terms, an activity may be designed to test both competences.

4.1.3. Tasks Concerning both Grammatical and Sociolinguistic Competences in the ESP Exams

The following activity is an example taken from an ESP exam concerning testing both competences:

F. Reorder the following sentences in order to have a meaningful paragraph:

- *But exactly what does it mean? The concepts and activities of business have increased in modern times.*
- *One definition of business is the production, distribution, and sale of goods and services for profit.*
- *Business is a word which is commonly used in many different languages.*
- *It is then a combination of production, distribution and sales for the making of an economic surplus.*
- *Traditionally, business simply meant exchange or trade things people wanted or needed.*
- *Today it has a more technical definition.*

(English Exam, 2017)

It seems that this task is designed to test both learners' grammatical and sociolinguistic competences. In this case, the students should have the capacity to link between these sentences to form correct sentences. It means, they should master the grammatical rules. In addition, to make a meaningful paragraph the students should understand the topic in order to use appropriate sentence in its place.

After analysing the questionnaire and the ESP exams, we answer the research question stated in the general introduction *'what are the different tasks used in the ESP exams in the Department of Economics at MMUTO?'*. The first hypothesis that states that the different activities used in ESP exams are dialogues and writing essays is confirmed but only partially; that is to say, most of the activities used in the ESP exams are grammar and vocabulary activities such as: fill in the gap.

The following part is devoted to discuss teaching and testing grammatical and sociolinguistic competences in ESP.

4.2. Teachers' Testing of Grammatical and Sociolinguistic Competences in ESP

4.2.1. Teachers' Conception of Sociolinguistic Competence

The results obtained from the questionnaire indicate that most of the teachers are aware of the concept of sociolinguistic competence. This is noticeable by the answers they have provided as presented in the previous chapter. Although, teachers' conceptions are slightly different from one another but they all revolve around the same sense. That is, sociolinguistic competence is the ability of the learners to use appropriate language in different contexts. However, some teachers have claimed that sociolinguistic competence is related to language form and grammatical structure. This view is different from what Canale and Swain claim (1980) that sociolinguistic competence is the learners' ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts. Therefore, we deduce that some teachers are not familiar with this concept and they do not have enough background information about it.

4.2.2. Teachers' Teaching and Testing of ESP

The findings of the questionnaire when asking teachers about what competence do learners need to learn in ESP reveal that the majority (69.23%) of the teachers have claimed that the students in ESP need to learn *'how to communicate'* rather than *'grammatical structure'* and *' vocabulary'* (See diagram 2). In addition, most teachers (70%) have claimed that they give importance to both grammatical and sociolinguistic competences while teaching ESP (See diagram 4). Also, from the results displayed in diagram 5, (81.28%) of the teachers teach the learners to communicate more than to write correct sentences (grammar). Relying on the findings of the questionnaire, it can be deduced that in ESP classes, teachers focus more on sociolinguistic competence than on grammatical competence. That is they teach the learners how to communicate in different target situations. In this view the Moroccan English Language Guidelines for Secondary Schools (2007:32) add that "*it is necessary to further focus on the learners' developing the*

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ability to use social/ communicative functions accurately (correctly) and appropriately (in the right contexts)".

Additionally, in the questionnaire when asked about what teachers test in ESP, the results highlighted in diagram 9 in the results section reveal that the majority that is (90%) of the teachers have answered that they test productive skills (speaking & writing). While, only one teacher has claimed that s/he tests receptive skills (listening & reading). In addition, the results displayed in diagram 10 shows that the majority of the teachers (42.86%) give importance to all of: *"grammar/form", "content (knowledge in the field)"* and *"appropriate language use"* while testing their students. From the teachers' answers, we notice that ESP teachers test both grammar and the use of language.

It is worth mentioning that the outcomes obtained from the questionnaire are not in conformity with the findings derived from the analysis of (15) ESP exams. From the tables (1, 2 and 3) in previous chapter, it is noticeable that the teachers of ESP in the Department of Economics at MMUTO test the learners' grammatical competence (71.43%) more than their sociolinguistic competence (24.68%). This does not reflect what teachers have claimed about teaching ESP, that is teaching learners how to become effective communicators. However, in their tests more importance is given to the grammatical competence. According to Canal and Swain (1980:6) *"there are rules governed, universal and creative aspects of sociolinguistic competence as there are of grammatical competence".* So teachers should also give importance to sociolinguistic competence because they both play a vital role in language teaching and testing. Canale and Swain (1980:5) support this view by saying that equal importance should be given to both sociolinguistic and grammatical competences because they constitute the communicative competence. In other words, learners need to master the knowledge of grammar

(grammatical competence) and the rules of language use (sociolinguistic competence) to be able to communicate effectively in the target language.

Furthermore, the results from research studies conducted by Savignon (1972) and Tucker (1974) on learners' grammatical and communicative skills draw the conclusion that focus on grammatical competence is not a sufficient condition for the development of communicative competence. In this context, Simon Belasco (1965:482) claims that *"it must be no reason to focus on all aspects of grammar before emphasis is put on communication"*.

Canale and Swain (1980:15) on this point state that:

> One might begin with a combination of emphasis on grammatical accuracy and on meaningful communication, where such communication is generally organised according to the basic communication needs of the learners and the communicative functions and social context.

As mentioned in the quotation, grammatical rules and rules of language use go hand in hand. Teachers may combine these two elements taking into consideration learners' needs and social contexts.

Relying on what Canale and Swain say about sociolinguistic competence, one important element is that learners should take into account is *'target culture'*. In this respect, Wen (1999) argues for the importance of cross-cultural communication in the study of communicative competence. She (1999:9) believes that *"the ability for handling cultural differences in interactions should be integrated in the study of communicative competence"*.

In short, the results obtained from the questionnaire displayed in the previous chapter (See diagram 6) confirm Canale and Swain's view. The findings reveal that all the teachers (100%) have agreed that the target culture is important and affects the learning process, some have justified that language and culture are interrelated and if learners are exposed to target culture, they can communicate effectively. However, teachers' views on the importance of the target culture are not similar with what has been found from the analysis of the ESP exams. In

fact, we can deduce that they do not give importance to culture since they do not focus on sociolinguistic competence. Learners need to know the culture of the target language so that they will be able to understand when interacting with others. For example, a person working in a business company associated with a British or American one will face a situation where he/she will be required to speak in English with other British or American Employees. Therefore, one must know their culture in order to understand and especially in order to carry out an effective communication.

In the light of what has been mentioned in the review of the literature, ESP has known five stages in its development; in the first and second stages the main purpose of ESP courses was to produce a syllabus that focused on the lexical and grammatical forms. In this sense the first two stages focused on the surface forms of the language (Hutchinson and Waters 1987). It is until the third stage that the focus started to shift beyond the level of sentences. However, since the grammatical competence is to be found in the first position with a percentage of (71.43%) in the ESP exams as highlighted in the previous chapter (see table 1). Such focus indicates that teachers of ESP in the Department of Economics at MMUTO still remain in the first and second stages of ESP. That is to say, they focus on the grammatical and lexical features of language. According to Allen and Widdowson quoted by Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 10-11):

> We take the view that the difficulties which the students encounter arise not so much from a defective knowledge of the system of English, but from an unfamiliarity with English use, and that consequently their needs cannot be met by a course which simply provides further practice in the composition of sentences.

Thus, the goal of ESP courses have changed during the development of ESP, the focus now is to enable learners to function adequately in a target situation such us in work fields and this goal cannot be achieved on focusing only on grammatical competence.

After the analysis of the ESP exams and the questionnaire, we answer the research question stated in the general introduction *"Do teachers test students' grammatical or sociolinguistic competence or both?"* The hypothesis which states that teachers test more grammatical competence is confirmed.

4.3. Learners' Opportunity to try out their Language Competence through ESP exams

As it has already been mentioned, the results obtained from the analysis of ESP exams, indicate that most of the activities focus more on Grammatical Competence than on sociolinguistic competence with a percentage of (71.43%) as displayed in diagram 1 in the results section. In more explicit terms, the students are asked to perform tasks that are concerned with testing their knowledge in grammar rather than in sociolinguistic competence. It is important to mention that the goal of ESP programs is to teach learners how to communicate effectively in different situations. This is confirmed by the results of the questionnaire which indicate that teachers' main goal in teaching ESP is to prepare students to use English in specific domains. This is noticeable by the answers they have provided and which are displayed in the results section (see diagram 7). Therefore, the function of the ESP exams is supposed to know more about learners' language performance that is whether they have achieved the goal of the ESP classes which is the ability to communicate effectively. Indeed, there have been considerable debates about the issue of measuring the Sociolinguistic Competence through written tests or what is referred to as indirect tests. In this view Canale and Swain, quoting Clark (1972:132) have expressed that *"Indirect tests of proficiency do not provide an opportunity for the student to try out his language competence in realistic communication"*. This means that indirect tests, seek to measure one aspect of language in order to make judgments on something else. In this case, the ESP exams measure the

grammatical knowledge of students in order to make judgments on their ability to communicate.

Moreover, the results of the analysis of the corpus show that the ESP exams are incompatible with the findings derived from the questionnaire. When asked about their views on indirect tests, all of the teachers who represent (100%) (diagram 13) have agreed that indirect tests do not provide an opportunity for students to try out their language competence. some teachers hold that indirect tests do not test what should be tested; therefore teachers while evaluating learners in any skill should design more tests including tasks in the skill itself. While others justify that indirect tests are more related with writing than speaking. So learners can not engage in real communicative situation. This view is shared by a teacher who answers that "*it does not mean that a student is good at selecting the right answer on grammar items, he/she will be able to carry on a conversation effectively*"

In the light of what has been said above, it can be deduced that the activities included in the ESP exams do not correspond to the goal of the ESP classes. According to Canale and Swain (1980) L2 learners must be exposed to realistic communicative situations in order to test their sociolinguistic competence. To support this view, Diaz-Rico and Weed (2010) argue that teachers must not assume that just because a student can use a grammatical rule correctly in one context that she/he can use it correctly in all contexts. In other terms, this implies that the mastery of the grammatical skill does not guaranty that the learners will be efficient communicators in different contexts or communicative situations. Thus, teachers should design tests that focus directly on learners' proficiency in performing actual communicative tasks that best describe their language behavior.

4.3.1 Teachers' Main Aim in Testing ESP

The results of the questionnaire as highlighted in diagram 11 in the previous chapter, indicate that most of the teachers (71.43%) affirm that the main goal in testing ESP is to see if students have achieved the goal of the ESP classes. Another portion of teachers which corresponds to (21.43%) affirm that their goal of testing ESP is to score students' performance. Finally, a minority of them corresponding to (7.14%) recognize that the main aim of testing ESP is to select students who will pass to the higher level. In order to check teachers' answers, we will take a look at the actual use of sociolinguistic competence in the ESP exams and discuss the results that have emerged from the analysis of the corpus in the following paragraph.

In accordance with what has been said above, the main goal of testing ESP is to check whether the learners have reached the goal of their language training that is to say to see if students are able to communicate effectively in specific domain. In the words of Carroll (1980) a language test should support the program by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the language learners. Both the language teaching and the testing programs should be based on the instructional needs of learners. That is to say, the teaching program and the testing program should work in harmony to meet the needs of the language learners. Nevertheless, the results of the analysis of the ESP exams show that the activities included in these exams focus more on grammatical competence rather than on sociolinguistic competence. This implies that these exams are not congruent with the goal of the ESP program. Furthermore, the ESP exams are used for the selection of the students who will pass to the higher level. However, since the grammatical competence is privileged from sociolinguistic competence, teachers fail at determining the actual level of their students. Because, we cannot assume that a student will be able to perform a set of language functions and act appropriately in different communicative situations by testing only their grammatical

knowledge. As mentioned before it is not their ability to perform a grammatical task that will determine their language competence.

After the analysis of the ESP exams and the questionnaire administered to teachers, we answer the research question stated in the general introduction *"Do ESP Exams provide an opportunity for students to try out their language competence?"*. The hypothesis which states that indirect tests do not provide an opportunity for students to try out their language competence is confirmed because by performing tasks about grammatical competence, students do not actually produce language and interact in different situations.

4.3.2. Suggestions to Improve ESP Exams

To improve the ESP exams; importance should be given to both the grammatical as well as the sociolinguistic competences in order to design exams that meet the learning objectives. That is to say, the importance should not be given only to the grammatical competence because the knowledge of grammar is not sufficient in order to be able to communicate effectively. In this sense, Elvera Koran (2015:46) states that:

> One needs the knowledge of appropriateness based on the speech community he or she finds him/herself in as well, in order to perform an act to intend a certain communicative function. The knowledge of this appropriateness is called sociolinguistic competence.

In short, the main aim of teaching ESP is to help learners master both the sociolinguistic and the grammatical competences.

Furthermore, it is important to assess learners' oral skill since it is directly related to communication. So ESP exams should involve performance and interaction. That is, test takers should actually have to produce language. According to Morrow (1979:149) communicative tests involve *"face-to-face oral interaction which involves not only the modification of expression and content… but also an amalgam of receptive and productive*

skills". Accordingly, teachers should design "real life" language tasks and activities such as dialogues. This will allow teachers to know the students' actual knowledge of the language.

Since ESP students will become future workers, businessmen, managers and so on they will need to use English in everyday life and in different situations. Therefore,importance should be on tests that focus on both the grammatical and the sociolinguistic competences, in order to see if they have acquired the necessary skills needed. That is to say, to see if they are able to use a set of language functions and act appropriately, to deal with less routine even difficult situations, to express what she/he wants and can initiate as well as maintain a conversation.

In addition, ESP is designed for learners who want to learn specific English that they will need in their specific work field such us business, trade and economics. So, ESP teachers face learners who are specialized in specific domain who have background information and know why they are learning English. According to Mahapatra (2011:2) *"In most educational contexts, ESP is often taught by teachers who may have started their career as General English teachers"*. Therefore, teachers may follow a training program where they will be equipped with a variety of skills that include basic knowledge of their students' subject area in order to increase their knowledge to be better as professional teachers. So that they will be able to design courses and tests that fit their learners needs.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have dealt with a thorough discussion of the findings reached in an attempt to bring answers to the research questions that this work has set out to explore which are stated in the General Introduction. First, we have presented example of activities focusing on grammatical or on sociolinguistic competence. Then, we have answered the research questions. Finally, we have provided some suggestions to improve the ESP exams.

General Conclusion

This study was concerned with the field of language testing. More specifically, it aimed at investigating ESP exams in relation to sociolinguistic competence. It has taken ESP exams in the Department of Economics at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi Ouzou (MMUTO) as a case to carry out the study.

To investigate such an issue, the study has raised the following research questions.

Q1- What are the different tasks used in the ESP exams in the Department of Economics at MMUTO?

Q2- Do teachers test learners' Grammatical or Sociolinguistic competence or both?

Q3- Do ESP exams provide an opportunity for language learners to try out their language competence?

To bring answers to the advanced research questions, the research relied on Canale and Swain's *Framework of Communicative Competence (1980)*. Additionally, it has adopted the mixed-methods research combining quantitative and qualitative procedures for both data collection and data analysis. The study relied on a corpus made up of fifteen (15) ESP exams. Hence, we have analyzed the whole activities which are seventy-seven (77). Moreover, another type of data has been drawn from a questionnaire administered to ten (10) teachers in the aforementioned Department. The ESP exams are analyzed using Canale and Swain's framework and Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). The quantitative data emerged from the questionnaire are processed using computer software called SPSS. Whereas the qualitative data emerged from open-ended questions of the questionnaire are analyzed through Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA).

The findings deriving from the questionnaire indicate that the majority of the teachers design activities of fill in the gap (34.51%) and open ended questions (31.01%).These results are confirmed when analyzing the ESP exams. That is to say, most of the ESP exams are asked the learners to do activities related to grammar and ignored the activities that allow learners to engage in realistic communication.

To find out about teachers' testing of grammatical and sociolinguistic competences, results have demonstrated that (42.86%) of the teachers state that all of grammar, content and appropriate language use are important is testing ESP. To confirm teachers' responses, a corpus has been analyzed. The results reached from the analysis of the corpus have revealed that in all ESP exams, the teachers test learners' grammatical competence which represents (71.43%) and ignore sociolinguistic competence which represents only (24.68%). More explicitly, the results of the analysis of the corpus are in contradictory with teachers' answers. Such a situation clearly shows that ESP exams based on test learners' grammatical competence and not their sociolinguistic competence.

The present research acknowledges the existence of some limitations. First, the fact that due to time constraints the present study takes into account only fifteen samples of ESP exams. Second, the number of the participants involves in the research in confined to ten teachers only. This is due to the difficulty of getting in touch with them.

Hopefully, this research is a point of departure that would pave the way to further investigations in the field of testing such as: Investigating ESP exams in relation to other competences.

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Appendix 1: Teachers' Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Dear teacher,

The following questionnaire is part of our research that deals with the investigation of ESP examination papers in relation to sociolinguistic competence. Your answers will be of a great help for our research. So you are kindly requested to tick the appropriate box and make statements when required. Your answers will be only used for academic purposes.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Section One: Teacher's Profile.

Year (s) of experience in teaching English for Specific Purposes: …………........

Section Two: Teacher's background of ESP and sociolinguistic competence

Q1- How would you define English for Specific Purposes (ESP)?

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Q2- How would you define Sociolinguistic Competence?

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Q3- In your opinion, what competences do students need to learn in ESP?

A. ☐ Grammatical structure   B. ☐ Vocabulary

C. ☐ How to communicate

Would you explain why?

...……

……...

……......

Q4- While students learn ESP, they face the following difficulties:

A. ☐ To achieve fluency   B. ☐ To produce grammatically correct

Sentences

C. ☐ To understand written texts   D. ☐ To memorize new vocabulary

Section Three: Teachers' teaching strategies

Q5- What do you think is more important in teaching ESP?

A. ☐ Grammatical Competence   B. ☐ Sociolinguistic Competence

C. ☐ Both

Q6- What do you teach your students in ESP?

A. ☐ To write correct sentences   B. ☐ To communicate

Q7- Do you think that the target language culture may affect the learning process?

A. ☐ Yes   B. ☐ No

If yes, how?

…………………………………………………………………………………….................

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Q8- The main goal(s) of your ESP program: (you can tick more than one)

A. ☐ To write

B. ☐ To develop reading skill

C. ☐ To prepare student to use English in specific domain

D. ☐ To enable learners to function adequately in a target situation

E. ☐ To understand and produce English language

F. ☐ To learn specific terminology

Q9- My students practise the following tasks in classroom:

A. ☐ Dialogues   B. ☐ Role-play

C. ☐ Oral presentation D. ☐ Class debate

Q10- In order to use English for Specific Purposes appropriately in different social situations (e.g. business companies), what are the abilities that students need to master?

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…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Section four: Teachers' attitudes towards testing ESP

Q11- What do you test in ESP?

A. ☐ Productive skills   B. ☐ Receptive skills

(Speaking and writing)   (Listing and reading)

Would you explain your choice?

……

……

……

……

Q12-in your opinion, what is more important in testing ESP?

A. ☐ Grammar/Form   B. ☐ Appropriate language use

C. ☐ Content (knowledge in the field)   D. ☐ All of them

Q13- The aims of testing ESP are: (you can tick more than one)

A. ☐ Selection   B. ☐ Credit/scores

C. ☐ To see if students have achieved the goals of ESP classes

Q14- In ESP tests, the students are asked to answer the following tasks: (you can tick more than one)

A. ☐ Fill in the gap   B. ☐ Writing essay

C. ☐ Matching exercises   D. ☐ Open-ended questions

E. ☐ Other tasks

Q15- Indirect tests do not provide an opportunity for students to try out their language competence in realistic communication situations.

P.S Indirect tests are tests, in which learners are not performing the task itself but rather a task that is related e.g. evaluating learners' performance in speaking through writing.

A. ☐ Strongly agree   B. ☐ Agree

C. ☐ Disagree   D. ☐ Strongly disagree

Would you explain your choice?

…………………………………………………………………………..................

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………