RESEARCH ARTICLE

ESP for Medical Students in Yemen: A Study Investigating the Match and Mismatch of Student and Faculty Perceptions

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to gather information about the lacks and wants of existing ESP for medical students at Ibb University (IU) in Yemen as a part of a needs analysis with descriptive quantitative and qualitative methods. In this study, the quantitative data were collected using questionnaires (n=200) via the maximum variation purposive sampling strategy, while the qualitative data were obtained from semi-structured interviews (n=29) via convenience sampling. The statistical analysis was conducted using IBM® SPSS® Statistics V24. Descriptive statistics analysis involving means and frequencies was used to analyse the quantitative data. In addition, thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews. The inferential statistical procedures, using a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) and Mann-Whitney U, were applied to determine any significant differences regarding the English language lacks and wants of the current ESP course. The findings revealed that medical students were proficient in using main English language skills (i.e., reading and listening) but had major weaknesses in grammar, pronunciation and communication skills. Besides, English sub-skills such as reading textbooks, reading course handouts, reading study notes, writing test/exam answers, following lectures, following question/answer sessions in class, and participating in discussions were used proficiently by medical students as perceived by the three groups of respondents. Medical students are required to have more training in speaking and writing. Based on these findings, the present study concluded that conducting a needs analysis is crucial in designing effective ESP courses. Finally, some pedagogical implications would help tap for course designers and recommendations for future studies.

Contribution/Originality: This study identifies the gap between the English proficiency of Ibb University medical students and their ability to succeed in their major

courses and evaluates the desired English skills from the perspectives of students, ESP lecturers, and DM Subject Matter lecturers.

1. Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an approach to language teaching and learning that focuses on the specific needs of learners in a wide range of professional and academic contexts (Liton, 2015; Serafini, Lake, & Long, 2015). ESP has been developed as a subdivision of English language teaching to other language speakers for many decades. ESP courses are language programmes for learning English for a critical reason and specifiable need (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Johns & Price-Machado, 2001).

ESP researchers have established several classifications of ESP (e.g., Strevens (1977); Carver (1983); Hutchinson and Waters (1987); Dudley-Evans and St John (1998)). Jordan (2007) categorises ESP into two kinds: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational/ Vocational/ Professional (EOP/EVP/EPP) Purposes. Basturkmen (2010) splits ESP teaching into three main divisions, each with its subdivisions: *"(i) English for Academic Purposes (EAP), such as English for Academic Publication, (ii) English for Professional Purposes (EPP), including medicine, law, the military, and so on, and (iii) English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), for instance, English for technicians."* As shown in Figure 1, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) delineate that EOP includes professional (law administration, business and medicine) and vocational purposes for non-professionals in pre-work situations.

Figure 1: Classification of ESP
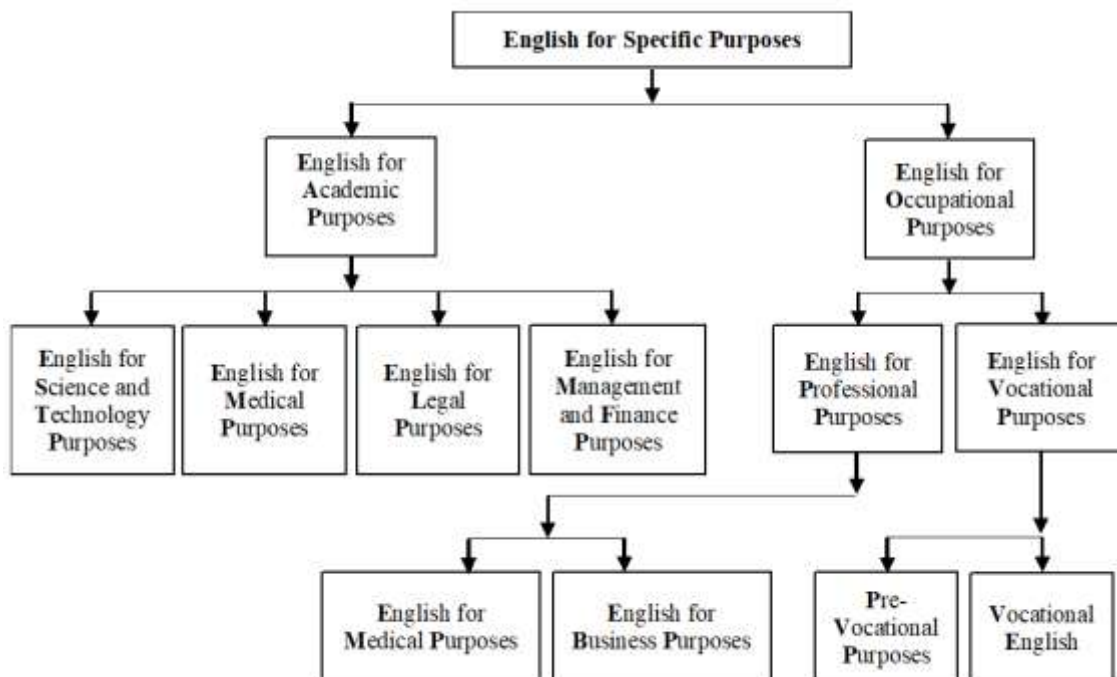
Source: Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p. 6)

In Yemen, Hillenbrand (1994, p. 5073) affirms that *"since unification, English … is taught and learned as a compulsory subject with regard to the learning and teaching of English in the Yemeni schools and higher education institutions".* The Ministry of Education (MoE) in