

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES AT AL ASMARYA UNIVERSITY

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### ABSTRACT

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This paper investigates the effectiveness of assessments used in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses at Al Asmarya University. The study emphasizes the importance of assessments with the students' needs, ensuring that the language skills taught are relevant to their future professional careers. A questionnaire was administered to fifteen English language teachers involved in ESP courses, gathering insights on the assessment methods employed and their perceived effectiveness in enhancing students' language proficiency. The findings reveal that a variety of assessment techniques are commonly utilized. These methods are designed to evaluate students' abilities to apply their language skills in context-relevant tasks, such as writing professional emails and delivering technical presentations. The results further indicate that teachers regard these evaluations as beneficial for improving students' competence in the English language, particularly with respect to grammatical constructs and lexical understanding. The study also identifies some challenges that need to be dealt with such as the design and the implementation of assessments. Challenges such as the need for special assessment tools and the evaluation of communicative competence are highlighted. The paper concludes with recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of assessments in ESP courses, ultimately contributing to better educational outcomes for students at Al Asmarya University.

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### 1.0 Introduction

Assessment techniques play a crucial role in teaching and learning. It affects not only the individual language learner but also the language teacher, the course, the institution, the history of the learners, the parents of the learners, the employers, and society. In teaching English for specific purposes, assessment techniques are used not only in teaching students but also in guiding, motivating, and empowering particular instructional contexts to gain insights into the knowledge, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses of students. The assessment functions serve as a foundation and a bridge to convey the teachers' expectations in several areas.

Assessment techniques is the driving power that builds, promotes, implements, and develops the materials and teaching methods, and provides direct feedback in the evaluative process. The assessment of courses at the university stimulates teachers to measure the extent to which

students have achieved the intended learning outcomes at the end of the courses. Assessment techniques become the ultimate target that all assessment tools and measurements adhere to and help students master the real academic and career skills. They work harder to obtain more scientific skills in order to contribute to progress and achieve advancements and excellence under their teachers' direction. The assessment techniques' results administered in courses seem to be the cornerstone of the framework for course planning, instructional practices, and formative progress. They can be affected by classroom performance, course assignments, schedules, and activities.

## 1.1 Background of the Study

The use of English in the field of education is seen through the teaching of English in courses provided under the label of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). ESP uses language proficiency in specialized areas like business or tourism. ESP focuses on tasks performed and works that are involved in from the training of students to become qualified people in their field English for Specific Purposes (ESP) constitutes a specialized domain within the realm of language instruction, concentrating on enhancing language proficiency and expertise tailored to particular sectors such as commerce, healthcare, or technology. This educational framework aims to cater to individuals seeking English proficiency relevant to their distinct vocational or academic contexts. ESP adopts a student-centric methodology, emphasizing the cultivation of linguistic competencies essential to their area of specialization. Consequently, assessments assume a critical role in identifying learners' requirements and gauging their advancements in acquiring the requisite language proficiencies pertinent to their professional objectives.

The use of assessment techniques in the realm of English for Specific Purposes has attracted considerable interest in recent times. This research paper aims to investigate the effectiveness of utilizing assessments in the English for Specific Purposes program at Alasmarya University. The study first examines the current assessment techniques employed by English language teachers in Al Asmarya University classes, which can provide insights into the broader context of assessment practices in the region (Umer & Soomro, 2019). Additionally, it explores the training needs and preferred methods of English teaching staff in terms of assessment, which can inform the development of effective assessment techniques (Almossa & Alzahrani, 2022). Furthermore the teaching of such English in majorities like pharmacy, accounting and others will provide Students with the necessary language skills to communicate effectively in their field (Bakri, 2023).

The research also considers the teachers' perceptions in the use of multi assessment techniques and the potential areas for improvement in the assessment process.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of assessment in the English for Specific Purposes program at Alasmarya University will be evaluated, taking into account the various factors that contribute to successful language learning and assessment (Ashraf, 2018). By examining the assessment techniques, training needs, and instructional strategies, this study aims to provide recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of assessments in the English for Specific Purposes program at Alasmarya University.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The specific research questions addressed in this study were:

1. What are the assessment techniques used by English language teachers in ESP courses?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the current assessment practices?
3. What are the areas that need improvement in the assessment of ESP courses?

### 1.3 Research Objectives

The main objectives of this study were to:

1. analyze the current assessment practices used in ESP courses in Al Asmarya University,
2. explore the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of these assessment methods, and
3. identify the potential areas for improvement in the assessment process to enhance the quality of ESP learning.
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### 1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

The using of assessments techniques help the teachers to improve their students' performance in ESP courses. Based on expectations from previous other research finding the following research hypotheses were formulated:

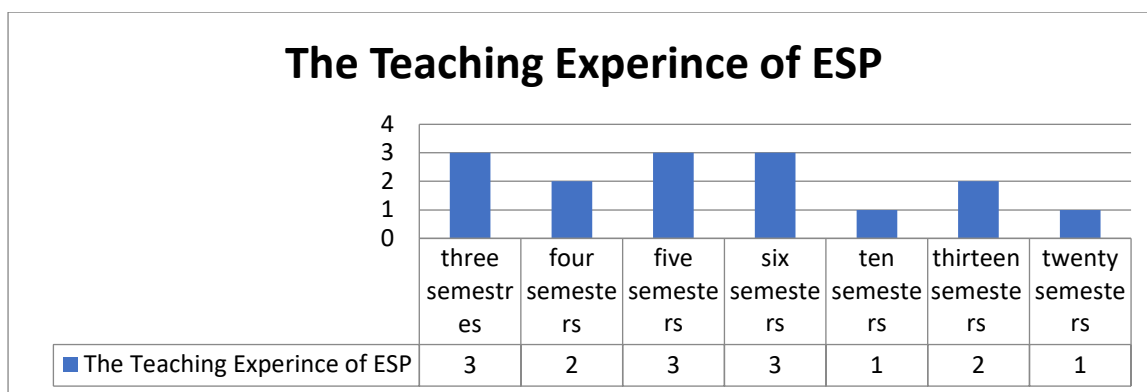
**1.4.1 Null hypothesis (H0):** The using of Assessment techniques in English for Specific Purposes courses has no effect on the students' performance.

**1.4.2 Alternative hypothesis (H1):** The Using of Assessment techniques in English for Specific Purposes courses has effect on the students' performance.

### 1.5 Methodology

The present study was aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using assessment techniques in English for Specific Purposes at Al-Asmarya University. This study answered three questions. First, What are the assessment techniques used by English language teachers in ESP courses? Second, What are the teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the current assessment practices? And finally, What are the areas that need improvement in the assessment of ESP courses? To answer these questions, the current study used questionnaire and the mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part consists of 18 close ended questions and the second part consists of three open ended questions in order to gather information about the assessment techniques used in the course, the perceived of these assessments, and the areas of possible improvement. The principal analytical tool for the questionnaire analysis was the Excel software. Its participants were fifteen English lectures, three of them were female and twelve of them were males. The lectures were randomly chosen at Al-Asmarya University, Zliten, Libya. The following figure clarifies the teaching experience of the ESP for those lectures.



## 2.1 Previous studies

Several studies have explored the effectiveness of using assessment techniques in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). One study focused on the impact of assessment for learning on Sudanese pre-medical students' performance in ESP, showing a significant difference favoring the experimental group (Andrew, et al 2023). Another study highlighted the benefits of using student-created questions for assessing students' performance in English grammar, emphasizing the importance of student-centered approaches and self-evaluation in enhancing learning outcomes (Natalia 2019). Additionally, a study in Hong Kong conducted a pilot study on implementing differentiated instruction in the ESL/EFL/ESP classroom, demonstrating that this approach enhances students' English ability, particularly in grammar, syntax, and inference-making skills (Majeed, et al. 2018).

These studies collectively underscore the positive effects of various assessment methods on students' performance and learning outcomes in ESP contexts.

## 2.2 Literature Review

The effectiveness of incorporating assessments in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction has generated considerable interest in the area of language teaching. Researchers have explored the complex relationship between teacher evaluation techniques and various aspects of student achievement, including reading ability, self-evaluation, and perspectives on reading (Ai, 2019).

Existing literature suggests that the relationship between assessment and student learning is complex and mediated by various factors. Self-assessment methods, in particular, have been acknowledged as a valuable tool in the field of writing pedagogy, with studies emphasizing their ability to enhance student writing proficiency across different academic levels. (Nielsen, 2012) Additionally, emerging technologies have presented new possibilities for more learner-responsive and effective assessment of writing, addressing long-standing criticisms of traditional assessment practices. (Cope et al., 2011)

One study, for instance, examined the relationship between teachers' use of different types of classroom assessments and their fourth-graders' reading literacy achievement, self-concept, and attitudes toward reading in four English-speaking nations. (Hao & Johnson, 2013) The results revealed varied outcomes associated with the use of different assessment types, underscoring the need for a nuanced understanding of how assessment practices impact student learning.

While the existing literature provides valuable insights into the role of assessment in English for Specific Purposes instruction, further research is needed to fully capture the complexities of this relationship.

### 2.2.1 Types of Assessments in ESP

There are plenty of assessments available now for ESP instructors in order to evaluate the students' progress, motivations, and ideas in learning and teaching process. The type of assessment utilized is predicated by the academic level and goals, and by the learning and syllabus required in the course of the program. It is important for teachers to clarify the respected activities and the benefits they gain in order to encourage students to make use of the valuable knowledge and applications when learning English.

The assessments help the participants to involve in the educational outcomes and ensure that exams are designed and completed for the benefits of others. Furthermore, it is crucial to coach both language and subject teachers well in the assessment concepts, skills, and instructions that must be put into practice in the schoolroom to support students' welfare and academic results. The personalized outlining of informative and summative evaluations and choices offers a

realistic plan of teaching and equates primary available assets in order to go beyond situation and choice.

### **2.2.1.1 Needs Analysis**

Needs analysis is considered as the first step in the course design. It is the process which the instructors evaluate the linguistic and cultural needs, as well as perceptions, expectations, and learning styles of students, seeking answers to what will be taught and how instruction might take place. (Langues 2003) defined the term 'needs analysis' as the collection and synthesis of data on learners' attributes, context, and goals, which is then used to specify as closely as possible to mixture of input/outcomes on the curriculum. Early ESP scholars such as (Hutchinson and Waters 1987), (Robinson 1973), and others were pioneers on emphasizing the need of a systematic analysis study of specialized groups in order to identify what would be appropriate instructional content and objectives for development of ESP courses.

(Robinson 1991) suggested that to be sure that what is being taught is relevant, bases for language materials should be grounded in an analysis of job activities. After (Hutchinson and Waters 1987) noted that an essential aspect of course design must necessarily be an initial phase to gather data to meet the stated objectives, other ESP experts such as (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998) contended that needs analysis research should be characterized by a double focus – it should have both target needs and learning needs for ESP course design. In ESP program development, a clear understanding of both the language learning outcomes required and the requirements of the target group learners is fundamental for effective curriculum development. Consequently, an ESP course for accounting or law fields as examples, might differ substantially in its learning aim and student proficiency than one for current or future politicians, or prospective or serving medical personnel.

### **2.2.1.2 Diagnostic Assessment**

Diagnostic assessment distinguishes an assessment whose goal is to diagnose learners' special needs, such as learning difficulties and language obstacles. The main purpose of this diagnostic assessment in ESP is to identify gaps in learners' subject-specific knowledge and skills, which a syllabus should then address. This method seems rarely to be employed in ESP. However, the few cases known traditionally take the Reading Assessment, which is regarded as a typical diagnostic test because it can provide information about learners' topics of interest, identify areas of language difficulty, help teachers prepare for teaching, supply useful individual learner profiles, and address learners' needs. Although the reading test provides such data on reading, the results do not always provide directly critical needs analysis information. Specific elicitation techniques may be more effective for targeting particular course subjects.

Eliciting techniques that have subjected some testing in L2 research concludes preconditions for the completion in tasks. An example of this is setting up traps so that failed completion provides datable information on what is missing from the learner's mental representation, proposing follow-up tasks or questions relating to students' problems in task completion, observing the communicative strategies students resort to when doing a task, asking for self-correction, probing for the reasons behind the response, prompting for reconsideration of the verb and collocation of the noun, using input enhancement, a technique that is reported to be successful in applying to texts to increase the chance of specific structures that being noticed and subsequently learned, and manipulating the input to vary the structures. In contrast, assessment centers on specific objectives. Svartvik states that a validated test can be reliable, which is essential in many situations. However, it can be criticized if the purpose is extensive. Once a result is exhaustive, the difference between students 1, 2, and 3 can significantly affect their future.

### **2.2.1.3 Formative Assessment**

The purposes of this assessment assess the data to be measured for individual and group performance, and the effectiveness of the school, program, or course. To be useful for those purposes, formative assessments must be transparently rooted in the instructional activities. The established principle asserts that individuals learn most proficiently when they act as teachers; therefore, it is crucial that, as much as possible, students are involved in the creation of formative assessments.

The first formative assessment happens in the classroom. The instructor selects an activity and follows up either with the whole class or with individual students, including potentially every student. A high-quality answer to each question is facilitated by clear rubrics, and exercising the use leads to the emergence of questions that are meaningful and important to the performer.

These rubrics will also help composing the formative discussions that are so critical to success in the language arts. The second assessment event takes the form of homework. The students, in consultation with the instructor, are to identify their weekly four points that are still covered in their portfolios. Because the performance data is collected after consultations with the instructor, it is especially important that each student knows how to use the rubrics and understand the difference between subjective and objective data. The students who do not meet the performance criteria should be required to present the activity for formative group discussion and feedback.

### **2.2.1.4 Summative Assessment**

The andragogy theory of adult learning suggests that learners in tertiary education are typically motivated by the leading to use learning immediately in the workplace. Faculty members would be wise to exploit this fact in driving student motivation in both their formative and summative assessments. But what are considered effective summative assessments? Summative assessment involves the structured evaluation that is typically conducted at the end of the course. Contemporary researchers often refer to the assessment of specialist subjects with a focus on readiness for work (or job-readiness) as vocational assessment.

Project assessments could play both roles of assessment effectively, according to Biggs, as active involvement with professional practice is assessed in a holistic, contextualized and task-specific environment. An instructor-designed assessment needed to establish how far students are motivated to attend to the required learning outcomes. If instructors prepare students strategically for formal assessment, it is likely that they will have less resistance to these assessments. The direct evidence from students confirmed that they would gladly follow the required learning path if this was established from the beginning in an English for Academic Purpose course. On a content level, students should have motivated to work as regards generic skills and task types from day one of their course.

### **2.2.1.5 Authentic Assessment**

Authentic assessments require students to perform a task or complete a project that simulates real-world activities, such as writing a report, developing a new budget, or designing a solution to a problem. The strengths of this type of assessment are engaging students in their course and the skills that assess are very broad. However, their very lack of specificity and fit narrow the content scope and objectives of ESP testing and lead to criticism. Furthermore, it should be noted that very often authentic assessments require much time and effort on the part of the teacher and time on the part of the students that cannot always be spared in ESP classrooms.

Given that motivated learners generally succeed, that relevant learning typically produces relevant outcomes, and that both depend upon conditions that are appropriately constructed through effective assessment systems. It is critical that ESP professionals develop and evaluate assessments with expectations published ahead of instruction. This is even more crucial in the case of newcomer students who have college-level academic content but have not yet fully mastered English language skills. The field needs to research, refine, and implement assessments that are embedded in the actual academic environment. Such assessments should be purposeful, require the application of knowledge, and require students to draw from skills such as analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, discriminating between different linguistic or non-linguistic forms, and justifying why the evidence supports their conclusions. Ongoing authentic assessments are also essential and consistent with the broader demands of educational accountability. Frequent assessments help students develop testmanship skills as well as topical and linguistic development. High-quality assessments are educational resources; consequently, substantial and timely feedback must be provided.

### **3.0 Result and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Results**

The results analysed carefully one by one using the Excel software and it revealed several key insights regarding the assessment of ESP courses.. 5-Likert scale was used: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The researcher used the term positive and negative responses in the following analysis. The positive responses refer to agree and strongly agree points. Negative responses refer to disagree and strongly disagree points.

When lectures were asked whether they were achieved the desired outcome without assessing, 42% was positive, 43% was neutral and 15% was negative. In contrast and after using the assessments, 91% of lectures responded positively and 8% was neutral. The using of the achievement assessments to ensure the desired outcomes are accomplished was highly confirmed with 93% positively. They also agreed with 86% of them that the using of assessment give the lectures the chance to perceive students' level. They also added that the assessments have increased students' confidence and autonomy with 79% positive responses. When lectures were asked about the students' responsibility, they were positively agreed with 93% and they also claimed with 71% positive responses that students' tension of final exams was reduced.

#### **3.2 Discussion**

The results clarified the most common used assessment techniques in ESP courses include written exams, presentations, and project-based assessments. These assessment methods are designed to evaluate the learners' ability to apply their language skills in specific, context-relevant tasks, such as writing professional emails, delivering technical presentations, and analyzing special related documents. The information collected from the survey was analyzed using a descriptive approach to identify responses and the information reflected in the answers of the questions. Most of the teachers claimed that using the assessment was useful and help them to improve their students' English language skills. By this, H1 was obviously confirmed and approved that the using of Assessments in English for Specific Purposes courses has effect on the students' performance. This was particularly true for the grammar and vocabulary sections of the assessments. The use of assessments in ESP courses at Alasmarya University is generally effective in improving students' English language skills. However, there remains an opportunity of improving in the design and implementation of these assessments, particularly

with the assessment tools, evaluating communicative competence, and the enhancement of professional development for teachers regarding effective assessment strategies.

Some challenges are also highlighted in the process of composing useful assessments, such as the need for special assessment tools, the evaluating of communicative competence can be challengeable, the students' low levels and confidences, the time of the course and the limited sources.

The teachers surveyed expressed their belief that the current assessment practices in their ESP courses are effective in evaluating the learners' progress and achieving the required learning outcomes. They identified various points that need to be improved, including the desire for more authentic, task-based assessments, the peer and self-evaluation techniques, as well as evaluations customized to the specific linguistic needs of the learners. However, they also identified several areas for improvement, including the need for more authentic, task-based assessments, the combination of peer- and self-assessment, and the assessments for the specific language needs of the learners.

The further highlighted findings stated the importance of using a variety of assessment methods to cater to the diverse learning styles and language proficiency levels of the ESP learners. They emphasized the importance of assessments that not only evaluate the linguistic skills of learners but also assess their ability to apply these skills in authentic, domain-specific contexts, as this approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the learners' linguistic proficiency and their readiness for their required academic or professional fields. Therefore, it is important to design assessments that measure both language skills and their practical application in specific contexts. This can be done through a combination of written and oral tasks that simulate real-life communication scenarios. Furthermore, the assessments should be designed to measure the specific language skills required in the learners' professional field. This can help ensure that the assessments accurately reflect the language needs of the learners. Furthermore, it allows for the identification of areas where learners may need additional support or instruction. This can help instructors guide their teaching methods to better meet the needs of their students.

Additionally, the assessments should be precisely designed to evaluate the unique linguistic skills for the learners' career. This can facilitate the evaluations with the precise linguistic requirements of the learners. Furthermore, it facilitates the identification of particular areas in which learners may need additional support or motivational courage. This, consequently, can allow teachers to adjust their teaching methods for the best needs of their students. Another significant finding from the research was the positive impact of using authentic assessments in ESP to measure real-world language proficiency. This type of assessments provides a more accurate description of students' abilities in real-world situations. Furthermore, it allows teachers targeting the learners' needs by forming instructional strategies. This can be helpful as it ensures the content and materials are appropriate for the students. The findings indicated that assessments can significantly influence student motivation and engagement within the educational process. As a result of what was mentioned above, it leads for effective and efficient learning process.

Finally, the findings indicated that the students' language proficiency and communicative competence can highly be improved by assessments. This can be noticed in the students' speaking and writing skills. The use of assessments has also shown to enhance students' understanding of specific language areas such as vocabulary and grammar.

## 4.0 Recommendations and Conclusion

### 4.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness of assessments in ESP courses at Al Asmarya University:

1. Re-evaluate the current assessment methods used in ESP courses to ensure they are unique for the students' needs and learning objectives.
2. incorporate a greater variety of authentic and task-based assessments that reflect real-world language use and allow for peer- and self-assessment opportunities, as these strategies have been shown to increase student engagement and provide deeper insights into learners' proficiency and growth in targeted areas.
3. provide more professional development training for ESP instructors to enhance their skills in assessment design, implementation, and analysis

These recommendations can contribute to enhancing the overall effectiveness of ESP assessments and improving student language learning outcomes at Al Asmarya University.

### 4.2 Conclusion

Assessments play an important role in the process of improving students' proficiency in ESP courses. The lectures' using of the assessments reduce students' tension of final exams and help them be more responsible for the desired outcomes of the course. The study also indicates some challenges that lectures have in their courses and recommendations are provided to address these challenges.

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