


Interdisciplinary Collaboration for Synergistic ESP Pedagogy at Chlef University in Algeria

BENALI REGUIEG Nacèra* 
University of Chlef Hassiba Benbouali, Algeria
n.benalireguieg@univ-chlef.dz

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ABSTRACT: *This study examines a crucial component of language education; the collaboration between English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers and subject-matter instructors (SMIs). The primary objective is to explore how ESP teachers at Chlef University in Algeria perceive this collaborative effort, seeking insights to enhance language education and subject integration. To gain a deeper understanding of their collaborative dynamics with the SMIs and elicit their opinions, the methodology involved distributing an online questionnaire to thirteen ESP teachers from different faculties at Chlef University. The results underscored the critical necessity of aligning subject-specific content with the pedagogical framework of language instruction, exposing previously unnoticed gaps in cooperative efforts. Despite the limitations, such as the singular institutional focus and small sample size, the suggested improvements for ESP instruction and subject integration encompassed a variety of strategic tactics. These included implementing interdisciplinary workshops, fostering reliable communication, and engaging in joint lesson planning. The findings may contribute to a more harmonious convergence of subject knowledge and language proficiency, addressing challenges and propelling the educational landscape forward.*

KEYWORDS: Collaboration, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Language and Content Integration, Subject-Matter Instructors, Interdisciplinary Teamwork

* Corresponding author

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Introduction

The collaboration between English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers and subject-matter instructors is a significant issue in language teaching and learning. ESP teachers provide English language instruction adapted for specific academic, professional, or vocational purposes, while subject-matter instructors afford the content in their respective fields, such as engineering, medicine, or law. The symbiotic collaboration between these two categories of instructors is paramount in guaranteeing students receive comprehensive and practical language education that aligns with their specialized needs. The language proficiency of ESP teachers in language teaching and learning complements the subject-specific content knowledge brought by subject-matter instructors (SMIs), leading to efficient integration of language and content instruction. However, distinctions in the teaching styles and approaches can create a rift in the collaborative process, making it challenging to integrate language skills with subject-specific content effectively. Additionally, time constraints and limited resources can impede the development of productive collaborative practices, diminishing the full potential of this partnership.

Given the growing recognition of interdisciplinary teamwork value in teaching ESP at universities, addressing the issue of collaboration has become significant. The lack of practical multidisciplinary cooperation may hamper the improvement of language learning outcomes and topic knowledge acquisition. Lesson planning issues, lack of consistency between language resources and subject matter, and potential disregard for integrating linguistic and academic proficiencies are problems brought on by inadequate teamwork. Therefore, this research investigates the extent of collaboration and its impact on ESP language instruction and subject lesson preparation at Chlef University in Algeria. It aims to provide educators with suggestions for improving ESP teaching methods through efficient collaboration.

The study focuses on the following objectives:

1. Examine the current state of collaboration between ESP teachers and subject-matter instructors at Chlef University in Algeria.
2. Identify the distinct responsibilities of English language and subject-matter teachers in the collaborative process of interdisciplinary teaching in English for Specific Purposes disciplines.
3. Explore the extent to which subject-matter instructors and ESP teachers have a similar comprehension of the language requirements for the specified topic area.

To achieve those objectives, the research is grounded on three core questions:

1. How collaborative are ESP and SMIs at Chlef University?
2. What are ESP teachers' and subject-matter instructors' existing collaborative practices?
3. What are ESP teachers' and subject-matter instructors' specific roles and responsibilities in collaborative teaching?

1. Literature Review

The aim of ESP is to equip students with the specialized language skills they need to communicate effectively within their academic fields. Due to subject-specific knowledge's complexity, language learners regularly run across problems. This condition calls for close cooperation between linguists and subject-matter specialists. Learners can more effectively comprehend linguistic nuance and disciplinary content by

combining language and subject knowledge. According to Austin and Baldwin (1991), collaboration is defined as "a cooperative endeavor that involves common goals, coordinated effort, and outcomes or products for which the collaborators share responsibility and credit " (p. iii). In many academic contexts, team teaching is discussed using a variety of methodologies. These strategies range from team teaching within a single course to team teaching across an entire program, an institution, a district, or even an entire country (Sturman, 1992; Katsura & Matsune, 1994; Wada & Cominos, 1994; Davis, 1995; Rosenkjar, 2002; Stewart, Sagliano & Sagliano, 2002). At the University of Birmingham, a course is instructed by a subject expert, while a separate tutorial addressing language difficulties is closely related to and directed by a language teacher (Dudley-Evans, 2001).

Another example is the "four-handed" instruction which refers to a much more cooperative method where two teachers often work together in the same classroom while switching off in terms of which one leads the activity and which one provides support (Corin, 1997). Collaboration among instructors has been promoted for many years, yet few do it. For instance, all but one of the five curricular model types utilized in CBLT (Content-Based Language Teaching) require team teaching, as stated by Shaw (1997).

2. Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive research design to explore the collaborative interactions between English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instructors and Subject Matter Instructors (SMIs) at Chlef University. The methodology includes an online survey and clarifies details regarding the population, sample size, sampling technique, and data triangulation.

2.1. Population and Sample

The study's population comprises ESP instructors from various faculties at Chlef University. From this population, a sample of thirteen (13) ESP instructors was selected. Although the total population size is unspecified, the sample was chosen based on instructors' expertise and experience in teaching English for Specific Academic Purposes. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants possessed relevant experience with collaborative practices involving SMIs.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

Data were collected through an online questionnaire, serving as the primary data collection tool. The questionnaire, designed to gather both quantitative data, included closed-ended questions for statistical analysis. To enhance the robustness of findings, triangulation of data sources was introduced through a combination of quantitative data from closed-ended questions, data from multiple ESP instructors across various faculties, and relevant theoretical perspectives. The use of methodological triangulation involved comparing the survey results with existing literature on ESP and SMI collaboration, enhancing the reliability of the findings. Data source triangulation was employed by gathering perspectives from diverse ESP instructors, reflecting different experiences, which enriched the analysis. Additionally, theory triangulation was applied by framing the data with collaborative teaching models and ESP strategies.

2.3. Survey Content and Structure

The survey questions were crafted to address the study's objectives, focusing on the degree of collaboration between ESP teachers and SMIs in areas such as unit/lesson design, vocabulary and content

alignment, lesson organization, and assessment. The survey also collected participants' insights on the benefits, challenges, and recommendations for effective ESP-SMI collaboration. (See Appendix).

2.4. Data Collection and Analysis

The online survey was distributed through a secure online platform, allowing participants convenient access and the flexibility to complete the survey at their own pace. In adherence to ethical standards, participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. After data collection, responses were compiled and analyzed. Quantitative data from closed-ended questions were processed using statistical techniques to identify trends and patterns.

2.5. Limitations

The study acknowledges certain limitations, including the relatively small sample size, which may limit generalizability. Nevertheless, the research offers valuable insights into the level of collaboration between ESP instructors and SMIs at Chlef University.

3. Results

The results highlight a deficiency in combined endeavours and mutual responsibilities during lesson planning and instructional delivery, thereby revealing possible gaps and missed opportunities.

3.1. Unit/Lesson Objectives

In this crucial aspect of instructional planning, the survey uncovered an agreed response, with 100% of the participants revealing no collaboration between ESP teachers and subject matter instructors in identifying unit or lesson objectives. This lack of collaboration raises the possibility of a disconnect between the aims and objectives of language education and the delivery of subject-specific content, which may have an effect on how well students learn as a whole. The consequences of this misalignment loom as a major worry. The effectiveness of linguistic and content-related skills development could be hampered without a cogent interaction between ESP instruction's language-oriented objectives and substantive goals.

3.2. Checking ESP Vocabulary and Content

According to 100% of the participants, there appears to be minimal alignment between the material taught in subject-specific courses and the language learning materials used in ESP programs. All respondents reported the absence of collaborative efforts in verifying ESP-specific vocabulary and content with subject matter instructors. This lack of connection may hinder students' ability to understand and apply complex ideas and specialized terminology, which are essential for their success in specialized fields of study.

3.3. Lesson Organization

According to the survey's findings, 100% of participants said that subject matter instructors do not often assist ESP teachers in organizing resources for lesson preparation. This finding highlights a potential missed opportunity to improve the pedagogical design and coherence of ESP sessions within the curriculum context by exploiting the subject matter teachers' knowledge and insights.

3.4. The Subject Instructor as a Supportive Consultant

According to all responders in the survey, subject matter experts do not support or advise ESP teachers. This lack of involvement makes it difficult to determine if subject-matter expertise can improve language instruction and meet the unique demands of learners within a disciplinary environment.

3.5. Subject Instructor's Shared Experience

With 100% of participants responding negatively, the findings once again demonstrated the complete lack of collaboration between ESP teachers and subject matter instructors with regard to exchanging prior experiences. The absence of knowledge sharing between these two groups may hinder the creation of educational approaches that successfully handle the difficulties of language instruction in a setting that is peculiar to a given subject.

3.6. Enhancing ESP Knowledge

There was a disagreement among the participants on who should be in charge of helping students become more knowledgeable on ESP themes. While 38.46% of respondents said the subject matter instructor is responsible for this, an equal number (38.46%) thought ESP teachers and subject matter instructors should share this responsibility. The two groups should communicate effectively and comprehend one another's perspectives to achieve effective instruction.

3.7. Using Examples and Visuals

The majority of respondents (61.53%) believed that using examples and images to help students understand complex concepts is primarily the job of the ESP teacher. In this perspective, the perceived proficiency of ESP teachers in adapting language instruction to individual student requirements and successfully communicating complex and abstract concepts within a language learning framework is highlighted.

3.8. In-Class Activities for ESP

61.53% of respondents thought that the ESP teacher is responsible for integrating subject-related in-class activities. This perception supports the idea that ESP teachers are most suited to provide activities that link language acquisition with the subject areas, improving students' comprehension and engagement.

3.9. Connecting ESP with Real-World Examples

Most respondents (69.23%) thought that ESP teachers and subject matter instructors should share the responsibility for engaging students through providing real-world experiences. This viewpoint implies understanding the potential advantages of fusing linguistic and topic knowledge to promote a greater comprehension of disciplinary concepts through interactive teaching strategies.

4. Discussion

The current research emphasizes the value of subject matter experts and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers working together to develop unit or lesson objectives. Students may have a perceptual gap if effective collaboration in this area is not encouraged, believing that language programs are unrelated to their academic demands. Integrating authentic materials and context-specific vocabulary is paramount in the pedagogical framework (Basturkmen & Shackleford, 2015). However, if subject matter

teachers and ESP specialists do not work together to validate ESP-specific language and content, students may have trouble understanding and applying discipline-specific terms and concepts. Students may find it challenging to understand discipline knowledge merely through conventional language if language elements and subject content are not aligned.

According to scholarly literature, collaboration is vital in educational settings, especially in multidisciplinary interchange and cooperation (Lo, 2014). When subject matter experts give ESP teachers crucial organizational support as they plan their lessons, a logical and unified approach to teaching and learning can be created. Conversely, the integration of language acquisition within the larger academic curriculum may be significantly impeded when such support is lacking. In this setting, collaborative interaction between ESP teachers and subject matter experts appears as a possible avenue to provide a more thorough and holistic educational experience, optimizing students' achievements in both the language and topic domains (Vargas Vásquez et al., 2016). The lack of information exchange between ESP teachers and subject matter instructors regarding prior experiences is another important issue that merits scholarly research. Sharing information and experiences between these two groups is essential for developing creative pedagogical strategies to promote efficient language education within certain disciplinary domains. The development and evolution of instructional approaches that primarily address the particular obstacles inherent in language acquisition within academic environments run the danger of being stymied without such collaborative interactions (Basturkmen & Shackleford, 2015).

According to Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1989), content-based language instruction, which carefully integrates subject matter content into language instruction, can dramatically increase language proficiency and promote academic accomplishment. However, integrating subject-specific knowledge into language education may unintentionally be hampered by the lack of coordinated efforts between ESP teachers and subject matter instructors. ESP teachers may be deprived of resources that allow them to customize language education to meet the particular disciplinary needs of their students without the critical input and insights gained from collaboration.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings and the references mentioned earlier, some recommendations are suggested to address the lack of collaboration between ESP teachers and subject matter instructors in academic institutions. These suggestions may result in a more cohesive and successful learning experience for students in discipline-specific language instruction.

5.1. Create Interdisciplinary Collaboration Workshops

To promote communication, understanding, and collaboration, educational institutions should plan workshops and professional development sessions that bring together ESP teachers and subject-matter instructors. Sharing best practices, talking about curriculum alignment, and finding possibilities for collaborative planning and instruction delivery can all be topics of these seminars.

5.2. Promote Regular Meetings and Communication

Encouraging regular meetings and consistent communication between ESP teachers and subject-matter instructors is key to improving collaborative synergy. These experts can get together to discuss important issues, including course content, learning objectives, and pedagogical tactics, by encouraging a culture of frequent interaction. Open communication channels can be developed during these interactive sessions, serving as excellent bridges between language acquisition and specialist subject knowledge. This

coordinated communication effort is a conduit for the fusion of language expertise and the nuances unique to a given academic field.

5.3. Establish a Framework for Collaborative Lesson Planning

Adopting a formal framework for cooperative lesson planning appears as a persuasive idea to support collaborative activities. In order to create classes that integrate language learning objectives with subject-specific content, this framework encourages a collaborative effort between ESP teachers and subject matter specialists. By combining these elements, courses can go beyond the limitations of the past and develop into all-encompassing learning adventures. Students are prepared to navigate a pedagogical landscape where linguistic fluency becomes deeply entwined with the complexities of the specific academic discipline through the harmonious union of language acquisition and subject matter competence.

5.4. Foster Subject-Specific Language Development

Promoting cooperation between ESP teachers and subject-matter experts to develop language resources for specific subjects is a proactive approach. This development aims to make subject matter instructors more aware of the crucial role language learning plays in their fields of study. The teachers are equipped to contribute to creating language resources that are in tune with the particular requirements of their disciplines by nurturing this consciousness. This collaborative effort is intended to provide a multidimensional result. First and foremost, students stand to gain from a more thorough and personalized learning experience.

5.5. Encourage Subject-Matter Experts' Attendance in Language Classes

Offering subject-area specialists the opportunity to join in language sessions occasionally is a powerful tactic. With the aid of this immersive method, these experts have the priceless chance to observe language learning in action, giving them a firsthand understanding of the complex dynamics of students' language-learning experiences. Through this close interaction, subject-matter specialists develop a sympathetic understanding of students' difficulties when they learn a new language, leading to a greater understanding of the barriers pertaining to language. Additionally, subject-matter specialists can investigate fresh approaches to fostering language development in their respective courses by working together. The SMIs can better adapt their teaching approaches to adequately address these difficulties because they have a more comprehensive awareness of students' linguistic struggles. Therefore, this mutually beneficial interaction drives a synergistic relationship between subject mastery and language development, resulting in an improved educational experience.

5.6. Use Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) Strategies

Collaboration is much more effective when using content-based language teaching (CBLT) techniques. CBLT refers to a pedagogical strategy in which language instruction is integrated into subject-specific content, fusing linguistic growth with studying academic disciplines. According to Brinton et al. (1989), CBLT can boost students' linguistic skills while improving their understanding of complex academic areas. By implementing CBLT, educators create a learning environment where language teaching transcends conventional limits and serves as a vital medium for the examination of challenging subject matter.

5.7. Establish Collaborative Assessment Practices

There is a need for collaboration between ESP teachers and subject matter experts to create coherent assessment systems. This strategic alignment entails a thorough examination that carefully encompasses linguistic and subject-specific learning outcomes. The ultimate result of this collaborative assessment effort is a dual-faceted evaluation that harmoniously represents students' linguistic growth and academic advancement.

5.8. Support a Culture of Collaboration

Within the arena of collaboration between ESP teachers and subject-matter specialists, supporting a culture of cooperation and mutual respect stands as a fundamental aim. Fostering an atmosphere where peaceful interactions thrive, and the distinctive contributions of each group are acknowledged forms the basis of this work. Beyond the main objective of encouraging students to develop academically, this collaborative environment emphasizes the intrinsic importance of the unique abilities that each cohort contributes to the educational scene. The development of this collaborative mindset, marked by honest communication and respect for one another, prepares the way for a stronger and more unified educational ecology. In a setting that fosters reciprocal respect, the symbiotic interchange of expertise takes on greater significance, ultimately strengthening collaboration. ESP teachers and subject-matter specialists bring a variety of proficiencies to the classroom, and educators can add a rich tapestry of complementing abilities to the learning process by recognizing and appreciating these contributions. This collaborative synergy not only improves students' educational experiences but also strengthens the basis for successful multidisciplinary teamwork, creating a setting where the expertise of many people can come together for the benefit of the students.

5.9. Support Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Research and Scholarship

To achieve multidisciplinary collaboration in language teaching and learning, institutions are urged to support and encourage initiatives that explore cutting-edge approaches to integrating language and content instruction. Innovative research undertakings can only succeed with the support of their institutions. Institutions demonstrate their commitment to the pursuit of educational excellence by committing resources to and appreciating the importance of these projects. The academic landscape is enriched with fresh perspectives and transformative practices when faculty members and researchers are encouraged to explore the unknown regions of multidisciplinary collaboration. Additionally, rewarding and acknowledging the importance of such projects encourages teachers to go beyond traditional teaching methods and accelerates the spread of effective practices throughout educational ecosystems.

Conclusion

This research emphasizes the importance of fostering interdisciplinary cooperation between ESP and subject-matter instructors at Chlef University in Algeria. The findings present cooperative practice gaps and suggest potential areas for improvement in topic integration and language instruction. Despite its shortcomings, which include a small sample size and a single institution emphasis, the findings highlight the urgent need for effective collaboration in ESP education. To improve collaboration, it is suggested to organize multidisciplinary workshops, boost open lines of communication, create cooperative frameworks for lesson preparation, and encourage subject-matter experts to contribute to language resources that are particular to their fields of expertise. Moreover, It is recommended to use content-based language teaching approaches, and to promote a cooperative environment and to support scholarly research and projects.

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Author' Biography

Nacèra BENALI REGUIEG is a lecturer and the Head of the Department of English at Hassiba Benbouali University of Chlef. Her career as a high-school teacher spanned the years 2001 to 2013 after she obtained her bachelor's degree from Blida University. She graduated from Chlef University with a magister's degree in 2012 and has been employed as a university instructor ever since. She graduated with a doctorate in 2019 from the University of SBA. She belongs to the TICELET Laboratory and is a member of the CPNM (The National Pedagogical Committee for the Subject of English.). Her research spans a wide range of subjects, such as EFL, ICTs in language education, blended learning, ESP, CLIL, CBI, assessment, and cross-cultural interaction.

Appendix : Questions to 13 ESP teachers

1. Do you work together with the subject matter teacher on unit/lesson objectives?
2. Do you check the ESP vocabulary and content with the subject teacher?
3. Does the subject instructor help you organize your lesson?
4. Does the subject instructor serve as a supporter and consultant?
5. Does the SMI share his prior experience with you?
6. Who should increase students' knowledge of ESP themes by presenting and elaborating on the material?
7. Who should use examples and visuals to convey complex concepts?ESP teacher/ SMI/ Both
8. Who should employ in-class activities that relate to the subject?ESP teacher/ SMI/ Both
9. Who should ask students questions regarding ESP vocabulary and content? ESP teacher/ SMI/ Both
10. Who should provide real-world examples of experiences connected to the subject matter? ESP teacher/ SMI/ Both