

The Pedagogical Challenges to Teaching English for Medical Purposes: The Case of The Faculty of Medicine at Sidi Bel Abbes University

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Abstract:

Teaching English for Medical Purposes is a strenuous endeavour due to the numerous challenges facing teachers. These challenges range from syllabus challenges to teacher and learner ones. Our study attempts to explore challenges to teaching English for Medical Purposes at the Faculty of Medicine at Sidi Bel Abbes University. The study revealed that Algerian teachers of English for medical purposes face issues similar to the ones of their colleagues in other countries where English is taught as a second or foreign language. It further underlined that, although teaching English in Algerian Medical universities is not without its challenges, there is evidence to consider that such challenges can eventually be overcome.

Keywords: English for Medical Purposes; Teaching English for Medical Purposes; Challenges of teaching English; Challenges of teaching English for Medical Purposes; Algerian Medical Faculty

المخلص: يعد تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الطبية مسعى شاقاً نظراً للتحديات العديدة التي تواجه المدرسين. تتراوح هذه التحديات من تحديات المنهج إلى تحديات المعلم والمتعلم. تحاول دراستنا استكشاف التحديات التي تواجه تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الطبية في كلية الطب بجامعة سيدي بلعباس. كشفت الدراسة أن المدرسين الجزائريين للغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الطبية يواجهون إلى حد ما، المشاكل نفسها التي يواجهها نظرائهم في البلدان الأخرى أين يتم تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية أو كلغة أجنبية. كما خلصت الدراسة إلى أنه وعلى الرغم من أن تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الطبية في الجامعات الطبية الجزائرية لا يخلو من التحديات، إلا أن هناك أدلة تشير إلى أن مثل هذه التحديات يمكن التغلب عليها في النهاية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الطبية؛ تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الطبية؛ تحديات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية؛ تحديات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الطبية؛ كلية الطب الجزائرية.

1. INTRODUCTION

English has gradually become the lingua franca of medical publications and conferences worldwide, with scholars from various languages using English due to the superior scientific impact and prestige associated with a wide international audience. Such a shift incited the need to not only teach General English at the tertiary educational level but address English for Medical Purposes as well so that the EMP classes could meet the demands of medical students.

Medical students need English to read specialist literature and academic publications that are published solely in English. Additionally, health professionals need a good command of English to keep up with recent developments in their medical field, to be able to take part in conferences held in English or write research articles for international refereed journals. Furthermore, due to the high mobility of people in the present-day world, many doctors need English when travelling for internships abroad or when communicating with their foreign patients. Some healthcare professionals may also want to pass registration examinations in order to practise medicine in English-speaking countries. In conclusion, healthcare professionals need a good mastery of English to develop academically and professionally.

All of the stated above ensued the crucial need to learn and teach English in the medical field, making EMP an important component of the medical studies' curriculum. Therefore, medical colleges in Algeria should not be content with just implementing the English courses but attempt to address learners' specific needs to help them be proficient and successful in English, both in their academic studies and in the professional workplace. Furthermore, teaching English for Medical Purposes represents a constant challenge, where the practitioners need to be flexible, receptive to new approaches and methods, able to make informed decisions and adapt their materials to the constant changes in the medical field. It can be an exceptionally demanding task if one considers the massive amount of necessary research and, at the same time, the extremely limited class duration. Moreover, the challenges proposed by Hutchinson and Waters appear to be very relevant even today. According to them, these issues can be assembled into three chief categories: 1-The lack of an ESP orthodoxy to provide a ready-made guide. 2-The new realms of knowledge the ESP teacher has to cope with. 3-The change in status of English Language Teaching (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). So, without any previous training on teaching and learning processes specific to ESP and without a ready-made syllabus, most ESP teachers transitioning from teaching General English find difficulties transforming or adapting their practices and methodologies to the EMP class.

Only through the analysis of these constraints can the didactic process be improved. In this article, various problems evidenced in a growing body of ESP/EMP literature are examined. Such examination allowed not only the discussion of the problems encountered while teaching English for Specific

Purposes to medical students at the Faculty of Medicine Taleb Mourad University of Djillali Liabes but also the conveyance of some solutions. It is hoped that by recognising the problems arising in EMP (which usually are the same for ESP), authorities, ESP practitioners and syllabus designers could reflect on their circumstances and maybe take action towards the prevention or the remedy of these problems. The suggested solutions are provided so that teachers who face these problems can learn from the suggestions given and can cope with them better.

2. English for Medical Purposes

The Medical field has entered the era of medical English, which resembles the era of medical Latin in that medical staff have chosen a single language for international communication. Consequently, students of medical fields are required to obtain information, knowledge and experience about medicine by listening to talks and lectures, viewing multimedia resources, and reading various science and technology materials, most of which are in English. Therefore, students of medicine or any healthcare studies need English to do their work efficiently and to further their specialist education (Kourilova, 1979, p. 431).

Dudley-Evans and St. John assert that ESP is divided into two main areas: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) as the first major branch and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) as the second one. They identify and then classified English for Medical Purposes (EMP) as both a subtype of EAP and EOP, distinguishing between studying the language of medicine for academic purposes (as designed for medical students) and studying it for occupational purposes (as designed for practising doctors) (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Thus, EMP students are adults who already have some familiarity with English, have the basic knowledge of English, and are learning the language in order to interact using a set of professional skills and execute particular job-related functions. Thus, the EMP program is therefore built on the assessment of learners' needs and the functions for which English is required.

English for Medical Purposes (EMP) as a subtype of ESP refers to the teaching of English to health care personnel like doctors, pharmacists, dentists and nurses (Maher, 1986). Maher goes on to state that EMP is designed to address the specific English language needs of the medical learner (e.g. Doctors, Pharmacists and dentists). Additionally, he states that it concentrates on both the themes and topics specific to the medical field but on a restricted range of skills that the medical learners may require (e.g., writing a medical paper, writing a case report or even consulting patients). EMP courses are similar to all ESP courses in that their learners study English with identifiable goals, such as asking for and giving information in different contexts, explaining various medical procedures, asking about medical history, talking about symptoms, patients' feelings, handovers, etc. Apart from enhancing communication skills, students also need to develop other language skills.

Maher further points out that most EMP courses are structured according to two essential frames, the first one being the type of learner involved (e.g., doctors, nurses, pharmacists and dentists) and the main purpose of the courses (e.g., to teach professional test preparation, practice in reading, writing, etc., or doctor-patient interaction). He also states that needs analysis can help shape and identify these two basic frames (Maher, 1986, p. 116).

Moreover, the basic insight into the trends of EMP emerging as this distinguishable branch of ESP allows us to seek and attempt to offer course design, content and materials related to medical English. That could be achieved by being responsive to target language learners' agenda. These trends emphasise the importance of intra-professional communication and spoken interactions in conferences or medical discourse communities (Master, 2005), coupled with the fact that Basturkmen considers doctor-patient communication skills to be the heart of the field (Basturkmen, 2010), something we believe can be partially the responsibility of the EMP teacher to address, either via setting checklists of what and what not to do or via simulating patient consultations where the students get to work on their communication skills. Another important aspect of EMP that needs to be considered when designing a syllabus is written medical genres, which come in various forms, from case reports to charts, to referral letters (Ferguson, 2012). Consequently, ESP practitioners deem finding out what is specifically appropriate, accessible and applicable for the target situation and the needs of the target language learners a necessity. In discerning the learners' needs, needs analysis is regarded as an integral part of decision-making processes in EMP. In the absence of conducting a needs analysis, using an English medical textbook is never sufficient for a medical student learning English as a foreign language, which is the case of the Algerian university since most of the medical English coursebooks in the market are mostly addressing the needs of students in an English as a Second Language setting.

3. Teaching Medical English

The disparity between the students' current language knowledge and the target proficiency must be covered by appropriate and adequate Medical English teaching, and to ensure such adequate teaching, we must first know our learners. These medical students are known to have a keen motivation to learn, which should empower their willingness to succeed in language learning. They are also aware of the fact that the language they learn will be a helpful instrument in getting status and better job opportunities and that it has the potential to allow them to participate actively in the exchange of scientific knowledge on an international scale since the better their Medical English is, the easier the contact with foreign patients and foreign colleagues will be. Nonetheless, the reality is sometimes different, where students tend to miss classes and show a lack of interest in the language subjects in general (both French and English), thus creating new challenges that need to be addressed for the smooth conducting of EMP teaching.

Furthermore, ESP teaching is tailored around the language needs of individuals learning the language; these needs of medical students include understanding referent texts and articles about the latest developments in medical science, practising and improving their speaking skills with an emphasis on acquiring medical terminology through role-play, debates, projects, and activities of pair and teamwork. In addition, practising writing skills in presenting case reports, referral letter, medical charts, case studies, and completing medical documentation is also beneficial. Moreover, medical students should be able to follow relevant literature, write research papers, and participate in student exchanges and international student congresses. Such activities provide a solid foundation allowing them to share their knowledge and experience with colleagues from abroad and publish scientific articles in prestigious international journals (Nataša Milosavljević, 2008). This aligns with Donesch claims, stating that the four key areas: reading scientific papers, speaking with patients and medical staff, writing medical correspondence (such as case histories, letters of referral to specialists, filling out medical forms, etc.), and delivering papers and presentations at international conferences should all be covered in the English language curriculum.

The syllabus of EMP courses should comprise the use of English in four major areas, reading scientific papers, verbal communication with patients and medical staff, written medical communication (writing case histories, referral letters to specialists, filling in medical documents, etc.), and delivery of papers and presentations at international conferences (Donesch-Jezo, 2014, p. 73).

Moreover, Doctors employ academic and technical jargon in the workplace, making Medical English very technical and context-based, but these Doctors blend it with everyday language. They hardly focus on proper sentence structure, which can prove challenging when teaching a foreign language. Additionally, Medical English is considered advanced English; thus, it cannot be taught in the same method as fundamental English language teaching (Lodhi et al., 2018). It is, therefore, a language of its own that rarely focuses on complete or proper sentence structure. A good testament to that would be the use of charts, where doctors tend to use short sentences and abbreviations, mainly since charting is expected to be concise and in a cryptic form (Hull, 2004). The learning activities in an EMP class would usually include the use of actual hospital charts and forms, role-playing assessment, descriptions of medical equipment, open exploration of treatments and interventions and even discussions and debates regarding medical-health conditions and best practices, all of which should be related to the main lesson being taught.

To conclude, English is regarded as an essential prerequisite for a medical career, and teaching English for Medical Purposes is becoming a significant part of medical education. However, medical students' communicative, academic, and professional language needs may vary depending on what stage of their career they are in. Therefore, we can infer

that EMP is an English course in which the syllabuses and the materials are adjusted to learners' needs and desires and because EMP is a sub-branch of ESP, which is English intended for specific disciplines, the methodology used by the ESP practitioners in class or in syllabus design should be conceived in such a way so as to fulfil such needs, and it would be extremely beneficial if we could mix approaches to structure and plan the course, yet such distinctiveness comes with its own challenges. Thus, teaching medical English poses a continuous challenge for ESP instructors since they are expected to be open to new approaches and methods, flexible, make decisions, and adapt to constant changes. And since higher education is mainly about long-term learning, where the teacher and the learner are equal partners, they both should be aware that education is a two-way process (N Milosavljević et al., 2015).

4. Methodology

Our study aims at investigating the most frequent challenges faced by EMP teachers around the world, and check the existence of such challenges in the Algerian setting, more precisely at the faculty of medicine Taleb Mourad University of Djillali Liabes, where the teachers were asked to describe their experiences of teaching EMP at that faculty, as well as answer some of the questions in regards to the difficulties met while teaching English to medical students.

After an intensive literature study of the topic, a questionnaire was elaborated (as a data collection tool) containing a set of 15 questions regarding the challenges that EMP teachers face. The questions were mainly yes/no questions with clarifications, if possible. These questions were established to check if EMP teachers at Taleb Mourad faculty face the same challenges as their counterparts in other universities, concluding with a semi-structured interview conducted with some of the EMP teachers at the faculty to further document any additional challenges that were not covered by the questionnaire. Worth mentioning that there are currently three EMP teachers working at the faculty, each teaching a medical field, i.e. one for medicine, one for pharmacy, and one for dentistry. We could, however, only reach two.

What is especially interesting in the context of this paper is the aspect of research that investigates problems, difficulties, and challenges that medical English teachers face in their daily practice, as well as some of the solutions, suggested in the literature. Thus, our research seeks to obtain a deeper insight into the challenges arising from teaching EMP in Algerian Medical universities and distinguish some of the problematic issues to better support university teachers in improving their work.

5. Previous Studies Related To The Challenges of Teaching ESP

According to Suzani et al. (Suzani et al., 2011), the success of language teaching and learning is dependent on two major elements, human elements and non-human ones. The Human elements are associated with the teachers' role and the learners' characteristics, and the student/teacher or student/student

interaction within the classroom. The other major elements are non-human ones, which include textbooks, syllabi, teaching aids and the number of hours (Suzani et al., 2011). Those factors can be challenging in teaching English, especially ESP, coupled with the challenges caused by the basic foundation of ESP, i.e. needs analysis. Furthermore, one of the most significant challenges faced by the teacher when developing such a syllabus resides in making sure that students acquire: the ability to use the technical vocabulary- the ability to use a general set of academic skills (such as writing an article, delivering presentations, etc.)- the last point is the ability to use everyday language.

Moreover, the challenges introduced by Hutchinson and Waters seem very relevant even in our modern classes. Their research suggests that these difficulties can be grouped into 1-The lack of an ESP orthodoxy to provide a ready-made guide, 2-The new realms of knowledge the ESP teacher has to cope with, and 3-The change in the status of English Language Teaching (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Previous studies, however, presented other problems; some of them are relevant to our study, and others are not. The first example is the study conducted by Alameddine (Alameddine, 2012) on teaching business English to Arab speakers, where the four major problems found by the writer were: 1- negative transfer (i.e. the use of prior knowledge of students' native language in the production of English, which results in unacceptable forms), 2- the difference in writing strategies, 3- prepositional knowledge, and 4- collocational patterns. Another study by Khasawneh (Al-Khasawneh & Maher, 2010) investigated the academic writing problems met by Arab postgraduate students at the Business College, where it was found that students faced problems with vocabulary, register, organisation of ideas, grammar, spelling and referencing. Other studies, for example, the one conducted by Ho (Ho, 2011), showed that the problems faced by course designers and teachers are related to the design of the course, the assignments, the tasks and the teaching methods. Another problem that stands true in our case is the one presented by Chen (Chen, 2011), where he describes language pedagogy as the challenge of ESP due to the widespread view that there is no firm theoretical foundation to support the teaching of ESP. Thus, one can state that most of the problems of the previous studies arose due to the need to achieve numerous learning objectives and fit a substantial amount of teaching materials in a short period, coupled with pedagogy issues.

6. The Challenges of Teaching Medical English

Teaching English for Medical Purposes to university students has its own set of challenges. For instance, teachers have to cope with different issues, such as students' low learning motivation towards languages and the intensive curriculum, as well as class heterogeneity. From the above and also considering previous works published, we felt that the problems presented by Behzad (Nezakatgoo & Behzadpoor, 2017), best met our vision of the challenges faced by English teachers in Algerian Medical universities. The results indicated that the challenges could be classified into three main

themes: Institution related challenges, Learner related challenges, and Teacher-related challenges. Nevertheless, we took the liberty to adjust the classification via additional adaptations.

6.1 Institutional Challenges

Institution-related challenges encompass all the problems that are not teacher-related or learner-related, consisting of undetermined or unrealistic aims, time restrictions, syllabus-related Challenges, limited teaching materials, evaluation, attendance and classroom size.

a. Undetermined or Unrealistic Aims

In EMP courses taught to medical universities, the educational objectives are usually not well-defined by the institution. Usually, the university only requires the teaching of the language, and it is improbable that they would elaborate on that with a set of objectives and elements to cover. And regarding curriculum expectations, it is believed the ESP curriculum poses greater expectations on learners of English For Medical Purposes than the General English curriculum due to the fact that learners will be dealing with EMP challenges on top of the usual General English ones, such as large class size and limited resources (Erickson, 2005). When asked about whether such a problem exists in the Algerian setting, the EMP teachers (participants) confirmed that it is a tangible problem. One even stated that: "we are not really told what the aim of the course is and what end results are expected, and it is impractical to expect much growth with only one and a half hours per week to cover both General and Medical English".

Thus, it is necessary that, at the beginning of each university course, the institution and the teacher cooperate in formulating actual and realistic aims and tasks so that students must know from the start what variety of the foreign language, to what extent they are going to master it, and how long it will take them to do so.

b. Time Restrictions

We should also consider the time and the amount of workload given to students. The time allocated to EMP courses is usually not enough for EMP students to master the language skills; thus, many students get disappointed and lose interest in foreign language studies. The Participants made it clear that it is not possible in the limited period of learning, 2 hours (or one and half hours) per week for only two semesters to teach a foreign language, to ensure students' acquisition of various skills such as reading special journals, writing scientific papers, and communicating etc.

Time limitations also cause teachers' inability to provide the learners of EMP with evaluation and feedback on an individual level, ineffective teaching, and the inability to carry out needs analysis projects or unproductive incomplete ones. Sometimes, there are too many materials to be mastered in very little time, and it is very challenging to design the course in such a way to cover this problem since it is inefficient to have a plethora of materials, yet not enough time to cover them all. This leads to the insufficient practice of

the four major skills, i.e. not enough time to practice the skills to the point where improvement is noticeable. Thus, the authority, in collaboration with teachers, should take the most important parts of the material which meet the learners' needs to be designed in the ESP course.

c. Syllabus Related Challenges

In EMP curriculum design, we find ourselves with two options, each with its own set of difficulties. Option one, where The Curriculum of EMP courses is crammed with the systematic study of grammar and the regular carrying out of translation exercises into and out of French, since Djillali Liabes University, like all Algerian Medical faculties, is a French medium. And where reading and learning technical vocabularies are usually emphasised, but the ability to write and speak the language is not. Thus, no alignment between the pedagogical syllabus and real-life tasks. Option two is the ESP-only approach to curriculum, where syllabuses are structured exclusively around issues of EMP, which leaves no space for English for General Purposes. The second option does also have a major issue; even though it might be reasonable to expect university students, most of whom have been learning English for at least seven years, to have a good level of language proficiency, the reality is often far more unpleasant. In ESP classes (and also in EMP ones), some students are considered beginners and need much more time before they are ready to tackle complex language elements, let alone technical or medical ones. A study by Dzięcioł-Pędich shows that this arrangement does not reflect the language needs of medical students and that a syllabus framed upon both EMP and EGP would be more beneficial (Dzięcioł-Pędich & Dudzik, 2015). Yet, both participants in our study raised the fact that teaching both General English and Medical one in the same year might be too challenging for both the teacher and the students.

d. Limited Teaching Materials

Finding the perfect textbook is extremely arduous because the language needs of students enrolled in EMP courses are so narrow and specific that most coursebooks on the market are simply too broad and general. Coupled with the fact that the selection of ESP textbooks available in the Algerian market is far from impressive due to the lack of specialised libraries. Even in a scenario in which one could get hold of a good EMP textbook, we face the problem that field-specific knowledge constantly develops and changes. A few-year-old coursebook may already prove outdated. Actually, the progress in science and technology is so enormous that no publisher is to blame for their hesitation since what applies to medical science today will undoubtedly be out of date next year. Leading to the problem of a lack of usable available up-to-date study materials (coursebooks).

The teachers in our study claim that this problem is relevant because of the lack of appropriate textbooks and one further asserts that the materials are very limited, and the teacher has to independently choose and carefully select appropriate materials according to the student's needs and level of knowledge.

For these reasons, teachers usually decide to produce their own materials. This is an additional inconvenience for teachers as preparing one's own materials is a demanding, time-consuming task that requires "skill, creativity, and, almost invariably, consultation with a medically-trained informant" (Ferguson, 2012, p. 257). Thus, the main consequence of the lack of availability of ready-made materials is that teachers have to spend copious amounts of time elaborating their own, usually almost from scratch (Charles, 2018; Woodrow, 2018).

e. Evaluation

Evaluation is another grey area with regard to the EMP setting since EMP tests do not usually look like language tests but rather like medical knowledge tests which are in English. Where the students are evaluated on their reading or translation proficiency mostly in the form of MCQs (Multiple choice questions), and the other language skills, such as listening, writing, and speaking proficiency, are not evaluated at all. Furthermore, as language teaching and field-specific topics are integrated, teachers may be biased, unintentionally, to evaluate students' language skills through the prism of their profession-related knowledge (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). One participant even called it the elephant in the room, stating that it was very challenging to properly evaluate the language skills of an EMP student, while the other pointed out that tests dealt with do not thoroughly evaluate the students' language knowledge. Thus, evaluating the students is another issue for ESP practitioners due to the unavailability of proper guidelines for evaluation, the large classroom size, and the student's ignorance of the evaluation criteria.

f. Attendance and Classroom Size

Attendance is yet another delicate problem in EMP classes in Algeria. Since these are considered lectures, students' attendance is not mandatory, so learners tend to skip the classes treating the language classes the same way they would subject classes, hoping to get a passing grade by cramming for exams, where one of the teachers stated that they were averaging around 35 students per class out of 77 and the other stated that they averaged less than 10 per class out of 66. And regarding class size, teachers affirmed that if all students would attend, they might have a problem, but with the usual conditions, the size is not that much of an issue.

6.2 Learner-Related Challenges

These challenges are ones that regard medical students, and they include learners' heterogeneity, Lack of motivation, learners' poor General English, students' lack of field-specific knowledge, and learners' focus on test results.

a. Learners' Heterogeneity

Although the problem of teaching heterogeneous groups is by no means restricted to ESP contexts, it can be argued that it is in ESP courses that this situation becomes particularly burdensome. The EMP practitioner faces several issues due to the fact that the ESP courses are typically developed for students with a common objective, no matter what their language proficiency

is. However, students at the faculty of medicine Taleb Mourad University of Djillali Liabes have different general English proficiency levels, some of them have poor to mediocre English levels, yet some have advanced mastery of the language. Thus, creating heterogeneous EMP classes, where some students struggle to catch up in General English classes and find the EMP activities to be overwhelming, while others find the General English activities not challenging enough and feel that they are not making the most of the learning situation (either case should be frustrating). Thus, conducting subject-based activities is nearly impossible when some students lack a solid General English foundation. Regarding this point, one of the teachers asserts that heterogeneity causes some serious issues for the learners, like losing interest because of different learners' concerns, background knowledge, and learning capacities. And the other teacher claims that even a placement test would not solve the issue since we would have to set two different classes and thus two different exams, something that they deemed unfair towards learners.

b. Lack of Motivation

Teaching foreign languages to university students of non-philological specialities is made complex by the fact that for these students, a foreign language is not a part of the special, professional education, which may result in a lack of motivation. They might think that medicine, pharmacy or dentistry is the best course, and they have no further instrumental motivation to learn the language. In Netikšienė's view, General English students in the English Department typically exhibit higher levels of learning motivation than ESP students (Netikšienė, 2006), which might be due to the fact that the General English learners, as Donna Erickson states, are often exposed to a more fun, and relaxed learning context than the ESP learner are (Erickson, 2005). One of the teachers, when interviewed, asserted that many students are not motivated enough to take the courses. The majority of students do not give more importance to learning a language but rather focus on medical studies. The other teacher claimed that the medical students are highly motivated. Nonetheless, it is the EMP teacher's responsibility to channel that motivation toward language learning.

c. Learners' Poor General English

One of the major challenges of teaching ESP at the university level is that a considerable number of students have low language proficiency levels. Subsequently, they sometimes do not understand the basic sentence structures and find difficulties using or understanding parts of speech. This produces the challenge of building an in-depth syllabus that would include General English and technical English, as stated above. Additionally, a study conducted by Rezaei et al. showed that, mostly, learners have problems with understanding the concepts of syntactic units in reading text (Rezaei et al., 2012); for instance, they do not understand what the concept of main/ subordinate clauses or passive/ passive forms is. Thus, learners encounter problems in syntactic units, causing reading and writing difficulties. Furthermore,

numerous studies showed that learners encounter problems in reading, vocabulary, writing and grammar due to low language proficiency and the lack of knowledge of basic language use. Consequently, learners encounter problems with ESP. In regards to the teachers' response, one affirms that they attempted to alleviate such a problem via translation from English to French or from English to Arabic usually occurs. While the other confirms that even after the introduction of General English in one term, it is not nearly enough to address all the language aspects, let alone have learners improve to a point where they can tackle the technical and medical aspects of the language.

d. Students' Lack of Field-Specific Knowledge

Medical Students study foreign languages in the first or first two years of their academic training, which means that they may be unacquainted with field-specific terminology or certain profession-related topics found in the syllabus of English for medical purposes since they would be expected to study such concepts in later years. One participant stated that students' lack of field-specific knowledge greatly affects the students' ability to use the language in a meaningful and practical way. While the other asserted that they came across this issue a couple of times; the latest was when they were teaching the use of comparative and superlative adjectives, where they set examples using the difference between a brand drug and a generic drug (used with pharmacy students) and found themselves explaining these concepts to the students since they were not familiar with the notions yet. This can, in their turn, influence the learners' ability to acquire the language, as this particular kind of knowledge provides the context students need to understand the English of the classroom. Moreover, according to Belcher, this can also be challenging for the instructor who needs to deal with information they themselves are not thoroughly acquainted with, as well as teach their own students not just the language but some of the concepts they are also not very familiar with (Belcher, 2006). Thus, a Lack of profession-related knowledge may hinder their language acquisition.

Additionally, the topics discussed or addressed in the class are often undervalued by first- or second-year students, which may influence their motivation and interest, especially since students do not feel the need to do some of the activities like learning how to write an article's abstract in English.

e. Learners' Focus on Test Results

It is an unfortunate reality that most students tend to focus primarily on grades and test results, neglecting the lifelong learning objective of the EMP classes, where their main purpose is to pass the exam with good or decent scores. Therefore, instead of learning the language for communicative purposes, the learners prioritised their performances in tests. Something that both our participants confirmed, saying that it is a bad habit. Where a teacher affirmed that many students are greatly concerned by test results, not so much by language learning; although they know the fact that they need the language

to acquire knowledge in the field, they still completely shift their attention to obtaining good scores in the end. And the other claimed they attempted to remedy the situation for years and were unable to do so.

6.3 Teacher-Related Challenges

Regarding teacher-related problems, they included unfamiliarity with the genre of medical subjects, teachers' unfamiliarity with psychological issues, teachers' unfamiliarity with testing methods or material development, and the lack of coordination.

a. Unfamiliarity with the Genre of Medical Subjects

ESP teachers teaching EMP to medical students are usually not familiar with medical terms, expressions, and genres. They sometimes tend to translate the terms literally, which does not always make sense. Some EMP teachers feel discomfort linked to the fact they are not specialists in medicine. In previous studies, some teachers expressed their discomfort while teaching EMP. In these studies, teachers believed that only those who are well aware of the genre of medical courses and are proficient in language skills and teaching methods are qualified to teach ESP, some confessed it was difficult for them to teach concepts they do not fully understand (Dzięcioł-Pędich & Dudzik, 2015), and others experienced a feeling of falsehood or duplicity when they taught words they themselves learnt a few days earlier (Szymańska-Tworek, 2017). Therefore, it stands true that teachers graduating from university are equipped with language proficiency and didactic skills, but the knowledge of the subject matter of the course is something they would have to gain with experience and practice. The participants in our study assert to such challenges, claiming that undertaking training and workshops prior to starting the job would have been appreciated.

b. Teachers' Unfamiliarity with Psychological Issues

Depending on what side of the coin we are looking at, and as stated before, teaching foreign languages to medical university students is made challenging by the fact that for these learners, a foreign language is not a crucial part of the special, professional education, such manner of viewing things may result in a lack of motivation, so it can be argued that it is the teacher's responsibility to help learners see the value in learning and mastering the language, which might be daunting at times. Another issue would be the fact that medical students usually treat the English classes the same way they would subject classes, so they tend to skip classes and attempt to cram for the English exam the same way they would the other subjects, something that the EMP teacher has to address as well. One of the participants asserted that: "Often times the learners' psychological needs and preferences are not considered mainly due to the lack of time". Otherwise, teachers do try from time to time to encourage students to be active participants in the class by trying to overcome feelings of shyness, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, etc. However, the other participant (EMP teacher) denies facing such an issue and stated that they address such

concerns at the start of the academic year by clarifying the importance of the language in the modern world, highlighting its significance for the learners and laying out a roadmap for the whole year so that learners know what awaits them, yet he maintains that he cannot vouch for everyone to do the same.

c. Teachers' Unfamiliarity with Testing Methods or Material Development

EMP teachers are not entirely familiar with the principles of language testing. EMP tests usually consist of translation tasks, MCQs or text comprehension tests. Such limited methods of assessment techniques reflect the EMP Teacher's lack of training in language testing for ESP classes. The participant confirmed these concerns stating that it would have been great if they underwent training on how to best evaluate the EMP learners. Furthermore, ESP practitioners usually lack knowledge of material development and preparation, so they need to take at least a course on material development. They usually copy some passages from Latin medical textbooks or download passages from internet websites, which can be productive but still lack the pedagogical implications to be of value since these materials are sometimes not suitable for teaching languages because they were not developed by experts in textbook development.

d. The Lack of Coordination

One other issue is the lack of coordination and support among ESP teachers due to a certain passivism making the first step toward collaboration. Besides, the cooperation between teachers of the same ESP content usually depends on their personal relationship rather than on the practical need to collaborate (which was experienced by the ESP teachers in our study). When they are asked for advice, they would provide it and help a colleague, and when requested to share their materials, they usually do, but, in most cases, they do not take the initiative themselves. As Hutchinson and Waters (1987) highlighted, there is little cooperation between teachers of ESP and other colleagues, and recent studies show that creating an atmosphere with a stronger sense of community and broadening its limits outside the teacher's office might promote collaboration as well as have a positive effect on teachers' job satisfaction (Meristo, 2016). Moreover, Universities are big institutions, and typically, teachers from other fields may not be personally acquainted, so creating learning and practice communities could aid the teachers in establishing a network of professional relationships, as the importance of cooperation cannot be underestimated (Norton, 2018).

Some other problems worth mentioning that were discussed by the previous studies are the unavailability of standardised outlines, lack of the ESP practitioner's freedom/ interest, Lack of authentic material, bad physical classroom conditions, an inappropriate system of conducting needs analysis, and ESP practitioners' Lack of awareness regarding the use of the internet, to name a few. Such challenges could have a direct impact on numerous elements, from classroom management, students' motivation, teaching efficiency, and the ability to achieve the desired results, to students'

responsive attitude and conducting classroom activities.

7. Suggested Solutions

Some of the solutions found in previous studies would apply to our case. Regarding syllabus design, we already know that needs analysis plays an important role in ESP. Therefore, before designing the course, Universities and institutions should conduct a needs analysis first in order to know what are students' goals. They are also required to determine the aims of teaching ESP and determine the language skills that EMP students should master. They should also provide ESP practitioners with a manual consisting of the aims of the course, syllabus, teaching strategies, and guidelines for evaluations. Universities and institutions are also required to check both general language knowledge and content knowledge of the ESP teachers and select those with abilities in language skills and knowledge of the medical content. Regarding limited coursebooks and materials, it seems that with the abundance of infinite Internet information and the effortless access to countless sources, the teacher has no problem finding suitable teaching materials. Nevertheless, it is an extremely time-consuming activity and can be considered an arduous task: for example, to find a video neither too long nor too short, preferably with English subtitles, an article of the appropriate level and satisfactory content etc., and that applies to every topic.

The next major challenges are Teacher-related, which can be solved through in-service training programs or workshops, where they get to learn about a variety of assessment techniques, as stated by Behzad Nezakatgoo (Nezakatgoo & Behzadpoor, 2017). Thus, ESP teachers should attend teaching, testing, and material development workshops or conferences to sharpen their knowledge about the requirements of teaching ESP and get familiar with the latest innovations in teaching ESP, testing ESP, and material development and adaptation so that there is a sense of uniformity among the ESP teachers' attitudes, beliefs, methods, techniques, and classroom activities. Furthermore, one additional possible solution is what has been advocated by Antić, that is ESP teachers need "intellectual curiosity" (Antić, 2016, p. 212), i.e. the willingness to cooperate with other teachers and subject specialists (Antić, 2016; Pavel, 2014) and the ability to figure out how to learn from and with their students (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), coupled with the possibility of participating in seminars, training courses, or other educational events devoted to ESP.

Concerning solving the Learner-related challenges, with regard to the diversity in learners' proficiency levels, placement tests are indispensable in bringing about homogeneity in an English language classroom by dividing the students according to their initial English proficiency level. Otherwise, such heterogeneity translates into a demand for dynamic curricula that must be constantly adapted by ESP teachers to the specific needs of every group of learners. Vis-à-vis alleviating students' lack of subject knowledge, it is advocated to move the EMP course toward further years of studies, or even

better, have EMP learners study English for three or four years. In order to diminish the obstacle of learners' poor General English, syllabuses need to be supplemented with tasks promoting general linguistic proficiency, coupled with an opportunity for learners to attend office hours so that teachers could work with individual students on their shortcomings. Thus, they provide them with strategy training so that students can learn on their own (Antic, 2007).

To address students' motivation and lack of interest, teachers can attempt to remedy that by having a thorough discussion with the students at the beginning of the course, where the teacher would not only present the syllabus requirements but also explain and elaborate on their future importance and applicability, thus, increase learners' awareness of the relevance and usefulness of the planned learning outcomes. Another way to motivate learners would be via the implementation of interesting interactive tasks that would engage students and motivate them to attend and work on their language skills, from slide presentations to audio recordings, to YouTube videos, to the use of online dictionaries, podcasts, or even crossword puzzles all of which can be a valuable source of authentic discourse.

Some of the other solutions would be increasing the number of English language hours, dividing students according to their entry language level, and reducing the number of students in one group. However, implementing some of those is possible only in theory, as in practice, these changes would lead to problems of different nature (e.g., placing the EMP course in the third year of studies would add to an already overwhelming amount of material to learn and exams to take by medical students).

8. CONCLUSION

Algerian EMP teachers appear to experience most of the same problems experienced by their counterparts in other countries where English is taught as a second or as a foreign language. These challenges are ones such as learners' heterogeneity, lack of motivation, learners' low English proficiency, students' lack of field-specific knowledge, learners' focus on test results, the lack of ready-made materials, a faulty cooperative environment with subject specialists and other colleagues, the large size of the ESP groups, and constant insecurity about their own knowledge of the specialised target content. However, regardless of the number of challenges faced by the EMP teachers in the Algerian context, most of them can be alleviated through needs analysis, which is considered the basis of teaching ESP or even its foundation. By conducting a thorough needs analysis, the course designer will be able to design suitable courses intended especially for learners of Medical English.

The residual challenges faced by EMP teachers should be overcome through consulting health practitioners and other EMP instructors, having intellectual curiosity as an ESP teacher, implementing interesting interactive tasks that would engage students and motivate them, and attending teaching, testing, and material development workshops or conferences. Moreover, teachers should be creative and eager to try out technological innovations and

online resources, for example, Internet podcasts, interactive tasks, slide presentations, and other tools, to be able to draw the attention of the digital native learners. To conclude, it is our belief that, although EMP teaching in Algerian Medical universities is not without its challenges and deficiencies, there is evidence to consider that if teachers are motivated and encouraged to overcome them, such challenges should eventually be topped.

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