The Effectiveness of a Proposed ESP Program for Primary English Teachers Major at Princess Norah University (PNU)

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ABSTRACT

ESP research has gained interest as a field of research for two decades. The aim of this study was to design and test the efficacy of a vocabulary training program to improve English language learning of female students at Princess Norah University. The subjects of the study were 40 female pre-service teachers. The study was experimental in that it employed pre-test, training and post-test. Findings revealed that students in the experimental group performed better than those in the control group during the posttest. The proposed vocabulary training program is recommended to improve EFL students' learning. The researcher concludes that while the program largely achieved its goals, the research has highlighted some areas for improvement. Based on the findings of the study several recommendations are forwarded.

Introduction

Since 2000, the number of universities in Saudi Arabia has increased dramatically. In these universities, there are a range of EFL courses that offered to students. English language has been viewed as one of the most learned languages in recent years. English language courses have been the focus of Saudi Arabia universities. One of the major aims of these universities is to develop the English language skills of students. Some universities teach English for general purposes and others teach English for specific purposes for students who will major in particular departments, such as medicine, nursing, engineering or computer science. ESP courses have been spread rapidly in the past few decades not only in Saudi Arabia universities. The purpose of current study was to design and test the efficacy of a training program to improve English language learning of female students at Princess Norah University.

Related Literature

The current literature review presents a theoretical framework on which the current study is based and provides an overview of the relevant research concerning in second language vocabulary instruction. In the field of English language teaching, there are a huge number of proposed programs that have been designed to enhance language learning. The evaluation of these programs has emerged in recent years as a major area of interest and has attracted the attention of educators. Recently, there are many educational programs that are available to improve learners' language learning. The importance of vocabulary training programs in language learning achievement has long been recognized.

English Language in Saudi Arabia

English language is considered as an international language. The main objective of language teaching in Saudi Arabia is to improve students' language proficiency with regard to reading, writing, speaking and listening. The Saudi Arabia government has come to acknowledge the importance of English language education, and to encourage Saudi Arabia people to develop their English language proficiency. In order to achieve this goal the Ministry of education as well as the ministry of higher education in Saudi Arabia modified the national curriculum of English education to motivate students to focus on developing their English language proficiency.

English language is introduced in the primary education, because in Saudi Arabia foreign language acquisition takes place primarily in the classroom. English as a school subject was only included in the curriculum of all primary schools in Saudi Arabia in 2003 (Elyas & Picard, 2010). Thus, students spend nine years learning EFL in schools. In Saudi Arabia higher education, English language is introduced in professional courses to develop students' communication skills to pursue their course successfully and excel in their field after their education. According to Al-Hazmi (2003), the reason for the increased demand for using English in many Saudi universities is related to the necessity of providing their graduates with up-to-date knowledge.

Language Skills

Vocabulary plays a pivotal role in the EFL classroom. Vocabulary is an essential part of language learning. Vocabulary supports the learning of the four language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. In other words, vocabulary is vocabulary an important aspect of language learning that should be considered as the core of language learning and teaching. According to, Vermeer (1992, p. 147), "Knowing words is the key of understanding and being understood. The bulk of learning a new language consists of learning new words: grammatical knowledge does not make for great proficiency in a language.

The lack of vocabulary knowledge is an obstacle of language learning or language acquisition. In other words, teaching vocabulary is one of the important components in learning English for students at schools and universities. According to Brooks (2010), "the mastery of English language vocabulary is vital for both ESL and EFL learners along with those who are aiming to learn English for Specific Purposes (ESP)". A good mastery of vocabulary is essential for English language learners, especially for those who are advanced learners of English for specific purposes. Thus, it's recommended that vocabulary

should be taught directly and indirectly. In summary, vocabularies play important roles in student's lives and future possibilities and that a large, rich, strong vocabulary is related to language proficiency (Beck & McKeown, 2007).

English for Specific Purposes and Learners Needs

The term ESP is generally represented as "English for Specific Purposes". According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), "English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning"(p.19). Robinson (1991) divided English for Specific Purposes (ESP) into two major branches, (1) English for Academic Purposes (EAP); refers to any English teaching that relates to a study purpose (Dudley-Evans & St-John, 1998); and, (2) English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) refers to the specific demands certain occupations place upon communicative ability while EAP (Lamri, 2010).

Like many other countries, Saudi Arabia has invested large resources in the development of English language education at the university level. At the university level, English is of great importance. Most of the students who join the university do not have a good background in English. In order to guarantee the quality of education, the teaching English for specific purposes in Saudi Arabia has been changed and developed rapidly in the last few years due. The basis of ESP is the teaching of language using content or subject matter. According to Karimia and Sanavi (2014), "the aspect of ESP courses is more noteworthy when these courses are offered at English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) regarding the particular domain of knowledge which the students are expected to master during their academic life". It's very important to take under consideration learners needs before developing ESP programs. According to Mountford (1981) term needs means "what the user -institution or society at large regards as necessary or desirable to be learnt from a program of language instruction" (p.27).

Dayff (1997) emphasized on the idea of learner or culture-specific courses. He believes that ESP courses should be designed for a specific target audience. They should be planned in close consultation with local teachers of specialized subjects and should be designed to parallel the specialized texts and culture that will be the students' daily diet. Holme (1996) stated that the content of the ESP program should be determined according to the students' needs. Thus, constructing an ESP program and selecting appropriate ESP program to meet learner needs is essential. Perkins (1993) stated that developing ESP course materials, selecting course content, and networking with other community colleges are essential elements for the academic English as a second language. Several researchers and language teachers have developed ESP programs to improve their students' performance. In terms of research methods to collect data for evaluating the effectiveness of ESP programs, interviews, observations, and questionnaires have been used widely. Wahby (1988) used personal observation and structured interviews to evaluate the existing English course. The study revealed that the students needed a different approach to learning English. It was, therefore, thought that the study-skills approach might prove to be better because it would enable the students to use the English language independently in the pursuit of their medical studies. The finding also revealed that the current course was not based on study skills and only helped the students to acquire some vocabulary.

Dief-Allah (1993) aimed in his study to design an ESP program that would meet the learners' needs at the faculty of Environmental Agricultural Science at El-Arish, Egypt. The data-collection instrument consisted of a survey. The researcher found that the prescribed materials were not related to the students' field. The planned ESP program developed by the researcher was more relevant and supportive of the work in which the students were engaged. Al-Jurf (1994) deigned an ESP course for graduate students at the Faculties of Arts, Administrative Science and Agriculture at King Saud University, based on their academic and vocational needs for English. This study used a two-part needs assessment questionnaire to reveal that these students mainly need to learn English to read specialized material and to translate the information required for their course, research and theses into Arabic. The finding of this study revealed that the ESP course for graduate students should focus more on developing students reading, translation and study skills.

Hussein (1994) developed an English language program for technology students at the Faculties of Specific Education in Egypt. Quasi-experimental research was conducted to identify the needs of the students using questionnaire and pre-posttest to assess the quality of the proposed program. The study pointed out the following findings: (1) there were no stated written objectives for teaching English; (2) the students' needs for English included EST and general English, (3) the existing course did not meet the students' language needs; (4) the students' level of English was low, and (5) there were statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental group due to the use of the proposed program.

In another experimental study, El-Shimy (1997) measured the effectiveness of an English course for Egyptian Home Economics students. The subjects were students at the Faculties of Specific Education in Zagazig and Banha. The researcher investigated the students' needs. A designed a course was introduced to a sample of 70 first-year students. The findings indicated that: (1) the students' standard for comprehension was very low, (2) no stated written objectives for teaching English to such students was found, (3) the existing course did not satisfy students needs; (4) there were no statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups in the pre-test, and (5) there were statistically significant differences in the posttest due to the newly designed materials.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quasi-experimental research was to design and test the efficacy of a training program to improve vocabulary learning of female students at Princess Norah University.

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were 40 female college students' at Princess Norah University kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The participants, with a major in English language teaching, spoke Arabic as their first language. The range in age of participants was 20-25. Randomly divided, 20 students were in experimental group and 20 students in control group. Participants were administered vocabulary tests of pre-test at the beginning of semester and post-test before final examination.

The Model of the Research

A quasi-experimental pretest-posttest data group design was utilized in this study to examine the efficacy of a training program to improve vocabulary learning of female students at Princess Norah University. Two groups participated in this

study, and both groups take a pretest and posttest. Only the experimental group receives the treatment.

Data Collection Instruments

The following instruments were used for the data collection in this study:

a. Questionnaire: The researchers used questionnaires to gather information and data concerning the needs of the students who took part in this study. The questionnaire was constructed by the researcher, based on previous research on English language needs (e.g. Johns, 1981; & Yasemin, 2013; Shoemaker, 1983, Trimble, 1985). The data were collected using a 23-item questionnaire. The questionnaire identified general needs of the students and elicited information in four skills, i.e. speaking, listening, writing, and reading. The questionnaire was designed on five-point Likert scale based on the following criteria, (1) the Highest Need, (2) High Need, (3) Moderate Need, (4) Low Need, and (5) the Lowest Need. This questionnaire was handed to the students respectively before implementing the ESP Program.

b. A training program: A proposed training program was designed and implemented.

c. A pre-test: A researcher-made vocabulary test was designed and administered to the participants. The initial test was shown to a group of specialized examiners in curriculum, methods of teaching, measurement, and teaching English, who provided their opinions and comments. The test consisted of 40 multiple-choice items covering a representative sample of the words that the participants were expected to learn during the study.

d. A post-test: The same vocabulary pre-test was used after the treatment as a post-test.

e. Evaluation questionnaire: At the end of the program, an anonymous program evaluation questionnaire comprising 16 items (5-likert scale) was filled in by students.

Data Analysis

In the analyses of the obtained data, SPSS for Windows 22.0 Statistics Program was used. While analyzing the data, the statistical techniques, means, percentage and standard deviation were made use of. For the experimental part of this study, at the beginning the pre-test scores of experimental and control groups were compared to see whether both groups were at the same level when the study started. Means of all tests belonging to experimental and control groups were compared and statistical analysis was made by using t-test results. Because of existing two unpaired group in this study, the type of unpaired t-test was applied to the results of the tests.

Findings

As a result of statistical analysis of the study data, following findings were obtained with regard to each instrument.

Student's questionnaire regarding the academic and vocational needs

Table 1. Mean, SD and Percentage of Reading Needs

Reading Needs	Mean	SD	Percentage
reading specialized text book	4.07	0.97	80.0
understanding questions in exams	4.00	1.17	75.5
reading lecture notes	3.60	1.31	65.0

According to the results of students' questionnaire, Table 1 shows the reading needs. As they stated, reading specialized text book, M: 4.07; SD: 0.97, (80.0%), understanding questions in exams, M: 4.00; SD: 1.17, (75.5%), and for reading lecture notes, M: 3.60; SD: 1.31, (65.0%) are at the best of students needs.

Table 2. Mean, SD and Percentage of Writing Needs

Writing Needs	Mean	SD	Percentage
writing examination answers	4.50	0.84	80.0
writing reports and assignment	3.85	0.98	72.5
writing notes from the textbook and lecture notes	3.90	0.87	74.5

As shown in table 2, students rated writing needs as follows: writing examination answers, M: 4.50; SD: 0.84, (80.0%), writing notes from the textbook and lecture notes, M: 3.90; SD: 0.87, (74.5%), and writing reports and writing reports and assignment, M: 3.85; SD: 0.98, (72.5%).

Table 3. Mean, SD and Percentage of Speaking Needs

Speaking Needs	Mean	SD	Percentage
participating in academic discussions	3.49	0.71	80.0
asking and answering questions in class	3.62	0.86	73.0
talking with lectures and students in class	3.47	0.78	65.5

Table 3 depicts the speaking needs. It was found that participating in academic discussions, M: 3.49; SD: 0.71, (80.0%), asking and answering questions in class, 3.62; SD: 0.86, (73.0%), and talking with lectures and students in class, M: 3.47; SD: 0.78, (65.5%).

Table 4. Mean, SD and Percentage of Listening Needs

Listening Needs	Mean	SD	Percentage
listening to lectures	3.97	0.80	80.0
listening to presentations in class	3.82	0.90	73.5
listening to students (colleagues)	3.07	0.91	65.5

Table 4, presents the results related to listening needs. It was found that listening to lectures, M: 3.97; SD: 0.80, (80.0%), listening to presentations in class, M: 3.82; SD: 0.90, (73.5%), and listening to students (colleagues), M: 3.07; SD: 0.91, (65.5%).

Table 5. Mean, SD and Percentage of Vocabulary Needs

Vocabulary Needs	Mean	SD	Percentage
identifying new vocabulary	4.52	0.55	80.0
classification of words	4.37	0.62	72.5
definition of words	4.30	1.01	65.5
exemplification of words	4.47	0.59	78.0

The above table indicates that, students' highest and high vocabulary needs was lacking identifying new vocabulary, M: 4.52; SD: 0.55 (80.0%), exemplification of words, M: 4.47; SD: 0.65, (78.0), and classification of words, M: 4.37; SD: 0.62, (65.5%), and definition of words, M: 4.30; SD: 1.01, (65.0%).

Table 6. Mean, SD and Percentage of Vocational Needs

Vocational Needs	Mean	SD	Percentage
translation from Arabic to English (Vice versa)	3.27	1.08	45.0
participating in daily conversation	3.00	1.03	35.0
chatting in English with friends	2.70	1.09	22.5
describing processes and procedures	3.20	1.32	45.0
technical terms in your area of specialization	3.19	1.09	40.0
reading texts on the internet	3.10	1.19	40.5
listening to English mass media	3.17	1.25	42.5

Table 6 presents the results related to vocational needs. Findings indicate that "translation from Arabic to English (Vice versa)" (M: 3.27; SD: 1.08), "describing processes and procedures" (M: 3.20; SD: 1.32), "technical terms in your area of specialization", (M: 3.19; SD: 1.09) "" (45.0)," listening to English mass media" (M: 3.17; SD: 1.25)," reading texts on the internet" (M: 3.10; SD: 1.19), ": participating in daily conversation " (M: 3.00; SD: 1.03) and " chatting in English with friends" (M: 2.70; SD: 1.09).

A Pre/Post Test

Based on the research purposes, the results of data analysis were as follows:

Table 7. Values of the t-test results for the differences in the Pre Test in the control and experimental groups

Groups	N	Mean	SD	T	F	P
Control	20	10.25	4.01	-.263-	0.23	0.794
Experimental	20	10.60	4.38	-.263-		

A careful analysis of Table 7 indicates that pre-test mean scores for both groups (Experimental Group: M: 10.60, SD: 4.38; Control Group: M: 10.25 SD: 4.01) showed no significant differences between the experimental and control groups. T-test calculations were carried out in order to see the difference of the means of the two groups. According to the t-test results for the recall pre-test, p value equals to 0,794. By conventional criteria, this difference is considered to be not statistically significant. Based on the findings the two groups were equally and did not significantly vary in their pre test.

Table 8. Values of the t-test results for the differences in the Post Test in the control and experimental groups

Groups	N	Mean	SD	T	F	P
Control	20	10.40	3.56	-4.101-	0.014	0.000
Experimental	20	14.85	3.29	-4.101-		

The findings obtained from post-test mean scores (Experimental Group: M: 14.85 SD: 3.29; Control Group: M: 10.40 SD: 3.56) showed differences between the experimental and control groups. T-test calculations were carried out in order to see the difference of the means of the two groups. According to the T-test results, p value equals to 0.0000. By conventional criteria, this difference is considered to be very statistically significant. In other words, the Means indicated that the differences in the Means favoring experimental group.

Table 9. Values of the t-test results for the differences in the Pre/Post Test in the experimental groups

Experimental Group	N	Mean	SD	T-Value	Level of Sig	df
Pre	20	10.60	4.38	-7.36	0.000	20
Post	20	14.85	3.29			

A paired t-test showed that mean difference between pre and post testing in the experimental group was -4.25000. The 95% Confidence Interval for the estimated population mean difference was between -5.42495 and -3.07505. There was a significant difference in experimental group scores from pre to post testing (t=-7.571, df=19, p=0.000, two tailed). Results indicated a statistically significant improvement in EFL students' vocabulary.

Evaluation Questionnaire

In order to achieve the research objective, descriptive statistics was used. The experimental group only participated in this part in order to evaluate the proposed program.

Table 10. Mean and SD of the evaluation questionnaire

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Over	20	2.94	4.31	3.7688	.4066
Valid N (listwise)	20				

Descriptive analyses including mean and standard deviation were used to investigate the perceptions of the participants in the experimental group regarding the proposed program. The findings show the overall mean of program evaluation (M: 3.7688; SD: 0.4066), which considered very high. The results revealed that, the proposed program was very effective.

The research respondents were asked to respond to 16 five-point Likert-scale items to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed program. The evaluation of the proposed program was presented by a Mean score of 5-point choice scale ranging from (1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-undecided, 4-Agree, or 5-Strongly Agree). The results of descriptive analysis (Means and Standard Deviations) were presented in Table 11..

Table 11. Mean, SD and Percentage of the program evaluation

The Program:	Mean	SD
1. is appealing and useful to the students.	3.85	1.38
2. has good linkage between English language skills	3.80	1.36
3. met the language needs	3.90	1.37
4. is relevant to language needs	3.90	1.20
5. prepared me to teach English in the classroom	4.00	1.12
6. gave me adequate training in English	3.65	1.30
7. increased my powers of language acquisition	3.70	1.30
8. has helped me to practice speaking skills	3.65	1.26
9. has helped me to practice reading skills	3.60	1.27
10. has helped me to practice writing skills	3.55	1.46
11. has helped me to practice listening skills	3.80	1.36
12. has helped me to improve my performance in reading	3.85	1.13
13. has helped me to improve my performance in writing	3.70	1.41
14. has helped me to improve my performance in listening	3.85	1.38
15. has helped me to improve my performance in speaking	3.60	1.35
16. has helped me to improve my vocabulary knowledge	3.90	1.33
Total	**3.7688**	**.4066**

The mean score range is used to identify the effectiveness of the proposed program. When Table 11 observed, in general, the views of students on the evaluation component of the proposed program are positive (M: 3.7688; SD: 0.4066). The above table presents the Mean and SD of each item in the evaluation questionnaire. As indicated in Table 11, all the Means Score of the items are high. As seen in Table 11, findings show that the participants' responds vary in the statements in the questionnaire. The participants believe mostly that the proposed program in played an important role in language learning, in other words the program develops their listening reading, writing, speaking skills and vocabulary knowledge.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of learning English language is to take part in communicative situations successfully. Vocabulary is an essential part in language learning. Limited vocabulary is the primary obstacle for language learning. When the overall results are considered, the study shows that the proposed program which was designed by the researcher played an important role on improving EFL students' vocabulary. Therefore, more importance might be given to vocabulary skill in the courses given at the university level. Pedagogical implications in the light of the study results, the researcher suggest the following: (1) EFL lecturers should be aware of the needs of their students and accordingly choose suitable techniques for activating English vocabulary, (2) EFL lecturers should encourage student-centered classes, (3) In designing ESP program, it is essential to take under consideration the different types of vocabulary, (4) Curriculum designers and decision makers are recommended to enrich the used curriculum with different educational aids to enrich students vocabulary learning, (5) Computer technology can be used to help teach vocabulary, and (6) One important implication for further research is assessing the needs of students will lead to other studies such as syllabus design, materials development, methods and approaches of teaching and learning.

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