Research Article

THE AWARENESS OF ESP TEACHERS AT SUDANESE UNIVERSITIES TOWARDS THE DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ESP AND GENERAL ENGLISH TESTING TECHNIQUES

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at investigating ESP testing techniques at Sudanese universities with reference to current practices. The study adopted the descriptive analytical methodology. This was because of the suitability of the methodology with the type of the research. The data collecting tool was a questionnaire for teachers of ESP at some Sudanese universities. The study came out with the following result; teachers are not aware of the similarities and differences between ESP tests and GE tests. The study recommended that teachers should receive training on how to design an ESP test, special testing environment should be provided for ESP testing and designing an ESP test should cope with the needs of ESP students and the materials they are using.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of ESP testing is one of the major obstacles facing ESP teachers at Sudanese universities. Many teachers consider ESP testing and CE testing as something the same. Looking to them from this view might lead to a number of difficulties. The approach used to solve this problem is the descriptive analytic approach. The hypothesis is that: teachers are not aware of the similarities and differences between ESP testing and GE testing.

Aims and Scope of the Study

A major concern of this study is to investigate the awareness of ESP teachers towards the differences between ESP testing techniques and GE testing techniques. The study has tried to reach the views of ESP teachers at some Sudanese universities. Therefore teachers from different Sudanese universities were required to fill in a questionnaire and respond to interview questions.

- This paper aims to provide a picture of the view of ESP teachers towards ESP testing and to what extent they are aware of the specificity of ES testing.
- The study is hoped to raise teachers of ESP awareness at Sudanese universities towards ESP testing. This

will participate positively towards the development of ESP teachers potentialities in designing ESP tests.

Theoretical Background

Few researches were written concerning the analysis of ESP testing techniques at university level. A study conducted by Almadani (2005), the study aimed at comparing ESP and GE testing and the current practice of ESP tests at Sudanese universities. He reached that teachers agreed ESP is different from testing General Purpose English. In addition many teachers mixed up between testing ESP and English for general purposes. The study recommended that: Needs analysis should be considered and ESP teachers should be made aware of the importance of ESP needs. analysis a clear ESP testing methodology should be considered and established by ESP practitioners. In addition ESP tests should be closely related to the materials given and needs analysis.

What is Language Testing?

According to Mc Namara (2000:5) tests can be categorized with respect to how they are designed (method) and what are for (purpose) In terms of method two types are distinguished; paper – and pencil Language tests' and performance tests;
"Paper – and pencil tests take the form of the familiar examination question paper. They are typically used for the assessment either of separate components of language

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knowledge (grammar, vocabulary... etc) or of receptive understanding (listening and reading comprehension). "Mc Namara (2000:5) test items are often in fixed response format; the testers have to choose the correct option from a number of responses. The multiple choice format is the most important type among the type of fixed response format. The multiple choice format tests is always composed of a stem and a number of alternatives, (Options) these alternatives consist of distract – intended to confuse testees and a key answer. The multiple choice format is always distracters to construct, but easy to mark. The testers' job is to choose the correct alternative. Scoring can be done automatically and can be done by a machine.

Concerning performance tests Mc Namara (2000:6) states "In performance based tests, language skills are assessed in an act of communication. Performance tests are most commonly tests of speaking and writing, in which a more or less extended sample of speech or writing is elicited from the test – taker and judged by one or more trained rates using an agreed rating procedure. These samples are elicited in the context of simulations of real – world tasks in realistic contexts"

Test Purpose

Language tests also differ with reference to their purpose, Mc Namara (2000:6) identified two types of tests with reference to purpose, and these are achievement and proficiency tests. Achievement tests are related to the process of instruction e.g. end of course tests, portfolio assessment, or observational procedures for recording progress on the basis of classroom work and participation. "Achievement tests accumulate evidence during, or at the end of a course of the study in order to see whether and where progress has been made in terms of the goal learning. Achievement tests should support the teaching to which they relate," Mc Namara (2000:6) concerning proficiency tests they are intended for future situation of language use without need to refer to previous process teaching.

Test Development

According to Backman and Palmer (1996:87) test development has three main components: these are design, operationalisation and administration. Alderson (2000:168) claims "test developers produce a design statement which covers the purpose of the test, a descriptive of TLU (Target Language Use) domain and task types, the characteristics of test – takers, a inventory of available recourses and a plan for their allocation and management" for operationlisation stage Alderson (ibid: 168) thinks that it's time for testers to select, specify and write i.e. "they produce a test blue print, with details of the test structure (number, salience, sequence and relative importance of parts and a number of tasks) and test tasks specifications (specification of purpose, definition of construct, setting; time allotment, instructions, characteristics of input and expected response and scoring) method. It is clear that the above stage is the most practical one among the stage since it describes the exact procedures of test constricting. The last stage shows that testing doesn't mean only producing scores or giving marks to students rather it is a stage at which a tester should review the whole, learning process e.g. his teaching method, material, students weak point, his way of testing … etc.

Types of Test

Tests in general can be divided into these types: Achievement/ attainment tests, proficiency tests, aptitude tests, and diagnostic tests.

Achievement tests/ Attainment tests

This type can be subdivided into class progress tests and (standardized) achievement tests. "The progress tests are designed to measure the extent to which the students have mastered the material taught in the classroom. It is based on the language programme which the class has been following and is just as important as a assessment of teacher's own work as the student's own learning" (Heaton 1987:171).

It is assumed that the results reached from these tests will familiarize the teacher to the work of every student in each class. "Achievement (or attainment) tests, thought similar in a number of ways progress tests, are far more formal tests and intended to measure achievement on the large scale" (ibid:172). "Achievement tests are based on what the students are presumed to have learnt – not necessary on what they have actually learnt more on what has actually been taught" They are too formal tests which are used to measure students achievement on a larger scale.

Proficiency Tests

Proficiency test is concerned simply with measuring a student's control of the language in the light of what he or she will be expected to do with in the future performance of a particular task or activity.

Heaton (1988) agrees with Mc Namara (2000) for the definition of Proficiency test They believe that proficiency test unlike achievement. test (looks forward, defining a student's language proficiency with reference to a particular task which he or she will be acquired to perform proficiency test are no way related to any syllabus or teaching programme; indeed many proficiency tests are intended for students for several different schools, countries, and even language background. The proficiency test is concerned simply with measuring a student's control of the language in the light of what he or she will be expected to do with it in the future performance of a particular task". Examples of Proficiency tests are those given to students applying to study at colleges or Universities which adopt English as a medium of instruction, or those given to students in order to function efficiently in a particular type of employment that requires certain mastery of English.

Aptitude Tests

These types of tests are designed to measure the student's probable performance in a foreign language which he or she has not started to learn. Another name is prognostic test; it is designed mainly to measure student's probable performance in a foreign language which he or she has no started to learn: i.e. it measures student's aptitude for language learning. Heaton (1988:173) considers language learning aptitude as a complex matter, consisting of factors such as intelligence, age, motivation, memory, phonological sensitivity to grammatical pattering. "The relative weighting given to these elements must depend on many factors and thus vary considerably from one individual to another. Some specialists in this field

maintain that it is neither possible nor desirable to take an overall measurement of language aptitude, consequently aptitude is something divided into various aspects according to a specific task for which a person is being trained: e.g. listening, interpreting, translating" (ibid:173). Aptitude test is used to predict student's probable weaknesses and strengths in learning a foreign language by assessing performance in artificial language.

Diagnostic Tests

Richard *et al* (1992:106) defines diagnostic test as "a test which is designed to show what skills or knowledge a learner knows and doesn't know". Examples of a diagnostic test are diagnostic pronunciation test which is used to measure the learner's pronunciation of English sound, phoneme, discrimination tests, grammar and usage tests and controlled writing tests.

Among these types, the only type of test used at Sudanese Universities is achievement or attainment tests; it is only used to promote learners from a level to another (at the end of semesters). Some Universities apply what is called course work test to be added to the final mark of the achievement test, they are made nearly twice per semester; other types of tests are not efficiently carried out, but some teachers may use them for personal use.

Approaches to Language Testing

Carroll (1981) identified two approaches for teaching and testing ESP which he described as opposing. He labeled the first one as the "linguistic" approach, starts with the selection of the linguistically described items of grammar and lexis and assess the behavior in terms of it its conformity to native – speaker norms. The second one, he labeled as the "communicative "approach starts with a specification of the socio – linguistic demand of a particular setting, and assesses the behavior in terms of its communicative value.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The apparent result of this paper is that

- Teachers at university level are not aware of the similarities and differences between ESP tests and GE tests. The following illustrates the analysis of ten questionnaire statements which were given to ESP teachers to respond to.

Question No. (1): Testing Techniques of both ESP and EGP should be the same

Table No (4-11)

The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Question No.(1)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	8	7.7%
Agree	14	13.5%
Not sure	6	5.8%
Disagree	56	53.8%
Strongly Disagree	20	19.2%
Total	104	100%

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2015

Figure No.(4-11)

The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Question No.(1)

Source: The researcher from applied study, Excel Package, 2014

It is clear from the above table No.(4-11) and figure No (4-11) that there are (8) persons in the study's sample with percentage (7.7%) strongly agreed with " Testing techniques of both ESP and EGP should be the same ". There are (14) persons with percentage (13.5%) agreed, and (6) persons with percentage (5.8%) were not sure   and (56) persons with percentage (53.8%) disagreed, while (20) persons with percentage (19.2%) strongly disagreed.

Question No. (2): ESP Tests Should Focus on the Specific Needs of Students.

Table No (4-12)

The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Question No.(2)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	51	49.0%
Agree	40	38.5%
Not sure	3	2.9%
Disagree	9	8.7%
Strongly Disagree	1	1.0%
Total	104	100%

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2015

Question No. (3): Testing ESP is Similar to Testing EGP.
Table No (4-13)

The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Question No.(3)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	5	4.8%
Agree	17	16.3%
Not sure	9	8.7%
Disagree	53	51.0%
Strongly Disagree	20	19.2%
Total	104	100%

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2015

It is clear from the above table No.(4-13) and figure No (4-13) that there are (5) persons in the study's sample with percentage (4.8%) strongly agreed with " Testing ESP is similar to testing EGP ". There are (17) persons with percentage (16.3%) agreed and (9) persons with percentage (8.7%) were not sure, and (53) persons with percentage (51.0%) disagreed, while (20) persons with percentage (19.2%) strongly disagreed.

Question No. (4): The Type of Tests Used in ESP should be the same as those used for EGP.
Table No (4-14)

The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Question No.(4)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	4	3.8%
Agree	14	13.5%
Not sure	8	7.7%
Disagree	59	56.7%
Strongly Disagree	19	18.3%
Total	104	100%

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2015

It is clear from the above table No.(4-14) and figure No (4-14) that there are (4) persons in the study's sample with percentage (3.8%) strongly agreed with " The type of tests used in ESP should be the same as those used for EGP ". There are (14)

persons with percentage (13.5%) agreed, and (8) persons with percentage (7.7%) were not sure, and (59) persons with percentage (56.7%) disagreed, while (19) persons with percentage (18.3%) strongly disagreed.

Question No. (5): Testing Language Skills in both ESP and EGP should be same:

Table No (4-15)

The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Question No.(5)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	9	8.7%
Agree	32	30.8%
Not sure	6	5.8%
Disagree	39	37.5%
Strongly Disagree	18	17.3%
Total	104	100%

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2015

It is clear from the above table No.(4-15) and figure No (4-15) that there are (9) persons in the study's sample with percentage (8.7%) strongly agreed with " Testing language skills in both ESP and EGP should be same ". There are (32) persons with percentage (30.8%) agreed with, and (6) persons with percentage (5.8%) were not sure, and (39) persons with percentage (37.5%) disagree, while (18) persons with percentage (17.3%) strongly disagreed.

Question No. (6): ESP Tests Should Include Questions for Testing Speaking Skills.

Table No (4-16)

The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Question No.(6)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	40	38.5%
Agree	49	47.1%
Not sure	7	6.7%
Disagree	8	7.7%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	104	100%

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2015

It is clear from the above table No.(4-16) and figure No (4-16) that there are (40) persons in the study's sample with percentage (38.5%) strongly agreed with " ESP tests include questions for testing speaking skills ". There are (49) persons with percentage (47.1%) agreed, and (7) persons with percentage (6.7%) were not sure, and (8) persons with percentage (7.7%)   disagreed.

The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Question No.(7)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	32	30.8%
Agree	57	54.8%
Not sure	2	6.7%
Disagree	6	5.8%
Strongly Disagree	7	1.9%
Total	104	100%

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2015

Question No. (7): ESP Tests Should Include Questions for Testing Listening Skills.

Table No (4-17)

It is clear from table No.(4-17) and figure No (4-17) that there are (32) persons in the study's sample with percentage (30.8%) strongly agreed with " ESP tests should include questions for testing listening skills ". There are (57) persons with percentage (54.8%) agreed, and (2) persons with percentage (6.7%) were not sure, and (6) persons with percentage (5.8%) disagreed, while (7) persons with percentage (1.9%) strongly disagreed.

Question No. (8): ESP Tests Should Include Questions for Testing Reading Skills.

Table No (4-18)

The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of question No.(8)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	39	37.5%
Agree	54	51.9%
Not sure	5	4.8%
Disagree	4	3.8%
Strongly Disagree	2	1.9%
Total	104	100%

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2015

It is clear from the above table No.(4-18) and figure No (4-18) that there are (39) persons in the study's sample with percentage (37.5%) strongly agreed with " ESP tests should include questions for testing reading skills ". There are (54) persons with percentage (51.9%) agreed, and (5) persons with percentage (4.8%) were not sure, and (4) persons with percentage (3.8%) disagreed, while (2) persons with percentage (1.9%) strongly disagreed.

Question No. (9): ESP Tests should Include Questions for Testing Writing Skills:

Table No (4-19)

The Frequency Distribution for the Respondents' Answers of Question No.(9)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	38	36.5%
Agree	53	51.0%
Not sure	5	4.8%
Disagree	7	6.7%
Strongly Disagree	1	1.0%
Total	104	100%

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2015

It is clear from table No.(4-19) and figure No (4-19) that there are (38) persons in the study's sample with percentage (36.5%) strongly agreed with " ESP tests should include questions for testing writing skills ". There are (53) persons with percentage (51.0%) agreed, and (5) persons with percentage (4.8%) were not sure, and (7) persons with percentage (6.7%) disagreed, while only one person with percentage (1.0%) strongly disagreed.

Question No. (10): The Grammar Component is the Main Constituent.

Table No (4-20)

The frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of question No.(10)

Answer	Number	Percent
Strongly Agree	15	14.4%
Agree	29	27.9%
Not sure	7	6.7%
Disagree	44	42.3%
Strongly Disagree	9	8.7%
Total	104	100%

Source: The researcher from applied study, 2015

It is clear from the above table No. (4-20) and figure No (4-20) that there are (15) persons in the study's sample with percentage (14.4%) strongly agreed with " The grammar component is the main constituent .". There are (29) persons with percentage (27.9%) agreed, and (7) persons with percentage (6.7%) were not sure, and (44) persons with percentage (42.3%) disagreed, while (9) persons with percentage (8.7%) strongly disagreed.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that ESP teachers at Sudanese universities are not aware of the differences and similarities between ESP testing techniques and GE testing techniques.

Therefore; most of ESP test used at Sudanese universities lack the basic requirements of ESP testing and the ESP tests are merely copies of GE tests. Based on this most ESP tests do not achieve their aims and don't check students' real competence in ESP language.

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