

Evaluation of 1st year Business English course at Annaba Economics and Management School

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the efficiency of 1st year business English course at Annaba Economics and Management School.

Evaluation is a very important step in teaching; it helps the teacher know if his course is being understood or not. Evaluation can take place at the end of the course (annual program) or during the course. It helps the teacher plan a remedy to the points or subjects that have not been well grasped by the learners.

Our research population are 1st year students (100 students). Our investigation concerns the first quarter (September, October, November and December) of this academic year 2015/2016. We try to find out whether the English course is meeting their needs and wants, whether it is relevant to their field of study which is economics and management and whether it is too much specific i.e. no consideration to general English. We try also to investigate if the way of teaching is motivating or not.

The results of our study show that not only business English is the need and want of this research population; some aspects of general English are also needed like grammar and phonetics because they have big difficulties in understanding some grammatical rules and in pronouncing words correctly.

Key words: evaluation, teaching, business English, course efficiency

Introduction

Evaluation is of a paramount help in teaching. It is the tool that helps both the teacher and learner to see whether their performance is on the right way or not. Henceforth, evaluation can be referred to as the measurement of the teaching/learning efficiency.

Since it is primordial for both teacher and learner, T.S. Rani (2004) distinguishes two types of relationships with evaluation:

Evaluation and the Teacher:

- Evaluation helps the teacher know to what point he has been able to achieve the instructional objectives. T.S. Rani (2004) precises that evaluation provides the teacher with adequate knowledge concerning the students' entry behavior.
- Evaluation helps the teacher to organize appropriate learning activities for the students to achieve the objectives.
- Evaluation helps the teacher to improve his classroom procedures and methods of teaching/learning in the light of feedback.

Evaluation and the Student:

- Awareness of objectives. Statements of clear objectives enable the students to know clearly what the teacher expects from them and they cooperate with him in achieving the learning goals.
- Increasing motivation. Knowledge about their performance serves as a motivating factor to the student and ultimately facilitates learning.
- Greater chances for increasing abilities and skills. Constant feedback makes students aware of their strengths and weaknesses, this leads to improve subsequent performance.

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Evaluation vs Assessment

Assessment is often confused with evaluation, but the two concepts are different. Assessment is used to determine what a student knows or can do, whereas evaluation determines to what extent a course or program is efficient and successful.

According to Herman and Knuth (1991) assessment data effects student advancement, placement, and grades, as well as decisions about instructional strategies and curriculum.

According to Maria Arias Cordova (2010) assessment is generally used to refer to all activities teachers use to help students learn and to gauge student progress.”

Harlen, Gipps, Broadfoot, Nuttal (1992) state: “Assessment in education is the process of gathering, interpreting, recording, and using information about pupils' responses to an educational task.”

According to Walvoord (2004), student outcomes assessment involves the following three steps:

1. Articulating goals and objectives for student learning
2. Gathering evidence about how well students are meeting the goals
3. Using the information to improve student learning

Evaluation on the other hand focuses more the course or the programme and whether it is meeting the needs of the students or not. According to Alexis W. (2011) “Educational evaluation is the process by which teachers, schools, and students are evaluated to indicate the effectiveness of education and the degree to which students integrate and understand information.”

Anthony Fredericks (2005) states that “effective evaluation is a continuous, on-going process.” Then, he adds that “Evaluation must be a *collaborative* activity between teachers and students. As regards students he says that “they must be able to assume an active role in evaluation so they can begin to develop individual responsibilities for development and self-monitoring.”

Principles of Assessment and Evaluation

According to Tracey Hall (2009) “not all students are alike.” Therefore, in order to best promote learning and to give a valid picture of individual achievement, the assessment and evaluation process should incorporate the following principles:

- assessment process should be planned and communicated to learners and parents prior to instruction
- assessment strategies must align with the prescribed curriculum objectives and with the teaching strategies used
- assessment must be fair and designed to enable each student to demonstrate the full extent of their own learning
- assessment should measure how well students learn as well as what they have learned
- assessment instrument should be highly varied in type
- assessments should cover a full range of instructional objectives including knowledge, skills, and affective items;
- assessment should be continuous.

Hence all the teaching/learning stakeholders including teachers, students, programs and courses and administration are all concerned with assessment and evaluation and on continuous manner.

The Study

Time of the study

Our study has taken place in the period between December 2015 and March 2016.

The Target Population

Our research population are 1st year students of Annaba Business School. Their number is 100 students but the questionnaire has been distributed to 60 ones and only 40 students have replied. Hence our research basis is the 40 answered copies of the questionnaire.

The research tool

The research tool that we have used in our investigation is a questionnaire of six open questions.

Q1: Are you happy till now with the English course?

Yes. No. Justify?

Q2: Are all the lessons you have seen till now clear?

English Tenses, Organization, Production, Advertising, Distribution Channels

Q3: Do you have difficulties with the business English terms that you have seen till now?

Mention at least 5 terms?

Q4: Do you see that General English is neglected till now by your teacher?

If yes, what do you suggest?

Q5: What are the main difficulties you have met till now in pronunciation?

Specify at least 5 terms?

Q6: How do you see the way of teaching of your teacher and what do you suggest?

It is worth mentioning that the students have been given the freedom to reply with any language they master better; either in English, French or even Arabic because what is important is their feedback.

Results of the Study

Results of Q1

Are you happy till now with the English course? Yes No Justify?			
Yes	33	No	07
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am happy with the English course and I am interested in it - It is my favorite language - I am interested in improving my level more - I want to continue my study in the UK - It gives us a chance to practice English - I am happy because I understand it - I enjoy learning new terms - In order to succeed in our study, we have to master English - The teacher has a good pedagogy - He explains well the course - We are learning new things - It is one of the few modules that we understand - I love it so much 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I do not understand business English - I do not understand very well - I do not understand when you speak too fast - I do not like English - I hate English - I do not understand the specific terms of business English 	

Table 1: Results of Q1

Results of Q2

Are all the lessons you have seen till now clear?				
English Tenses	Organizations	Production	Advertising	Distribution
*	*	clear	Clear	clear

Table 2: Results of Q2

Results of Q3

Do you have difficulties with business English terms you have seen till now?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Craft industry, gross national product, shareholder value, - depression, bulk, chairman, monitoring, recession, peak, - scheduling, incidental, owners, staff, dispatching, target, - supervisory, sponsor, endorsement, headquarter, appeal, - rent, sequencing, churn out, booms, recession, hierarchy, - order fulfillment, wholesaling, trough,

Table 3: Results of Q3

Results of Q4

Do you see that general English is neglected till now by your teacher? Yes No. Suggest?			
Yes	10	No	30
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I suggest general English to be included with business English during the course - I suggest to dedicate 45 minutes to general English and 45 minutes to specific English - I suggest some texts about: life, water, nature, problems of the society - I suggest that we have one session for general English and the other for specific English - Grammar: tenses - Yes I suggest that sometimes we need to get out of the circle of business English 			

Table 4: Results of Q4

Results of Q5

What are the main difficulties you have met till now with pronunciation? Specify?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hierarchical, headquarter, influencing, supervising, - endorsing, already, exhibition, booms, layout, - shareholders, fulfillment, standardized, to launch, - scheduling, chief, furniture, potential, hoardings, - subsidiaries, loading, bulk, influencing, - conviction, recognize, institutional, feature,

Table 5: Results of Q5

Results of Q6

How do you see the way of teaching of your teacher and what do you suggest?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - good and clear - he explains well the lessons - we suggest that he uses data show in order to be more concentrating - we suggest that he speaks in Arabic - he should not be very quick during the exercises - he should allow us using the electronic dictionary of our mobile during the course - he should give us the economic terms in Arabic also.

Table 6: Results of Q6

Analysis of the Results

Analyzing well the results of our investigation, a lot of conclusions can be drawn.

First, although 85% of the research population is happy with the English course, the other 15% who are not happy with the English course should not be neglected and left without a special care. Despite the fact of their negative attitude towards English language, a specific treatment should be given to these students to raise their level of motivation in order to make them love the English course.

Second, some make up sessions should be planned in order to repeat or explain again what they have not grasped very well. According to them the lessons of English Tenses and Organization are not clear to them so they have to be taught during the make up course.

Third, a special focus should be given to specific terms related to business English. They still have difficulties with these terms:

- **Craft industry, gross national product, shareholder value,**
- **depression, bulk, chairman, monitoring, recession, peak,**
- **scheduling, incidental, owners, staff, dispatching, target,**
- **supervisory, sponsor, endorsement, headquarter, appeal,**
- **rent, sequencing, churn out, booms, recession, hierarchy,**
- **order fulfillment, wholesaling, trough,**

So these terms need to be explained again during the make up sessions or during the other lessons.

Fourth, 25% of the research population declare that general English has been neglected and has not been given great importance as the one given to business English. Here we can say that their field of study obliges us, as teachers of English, to focus more on business English but we have to reconsider their suggestions for integrating more general English in the course. Some students suggest dividing the session in two 50% of the session time to business English and the other 50% to general English. Other students suggest organizing one session to business English and the next session to general English and so on.

Fifth, one of the main results of this evaluation is discovering their difficulties in pronunciation especially with the business English terms like:

- **Hierarchical - headquarter - influencing - supervising - endorsing - exhibition - booms - layout - shareholders - fulfillment - standardized - to launch - scheduling - furniture - potential - hoardings - subsidiaries - loading - bulk - influencing**

It is clear that English language is characterized by its phonetics, so if they do not pronounce well their message will not be conveyed especially when it comes to business communication where a mispronunciation can lead to the failure of the communication.

Sixth, our investigation has not neglected an important factor which is related to the way of teaching of the English teacher. It is known that a good teaching way can lead to positive attitude of students. Hence though the majority of our research population is satisfied with the way of teaching and declares that it is a motivating one, there is a minority that declares that the way of teaching needs to be adapted little bit according to their level and they suggest speaking slowly and translating to Arabic mainly the difficult terms of business English. I think that the teacher of English should not close his eyes on these suggestions.

Conclusion

To conclude, our research has tried to measure the efficiency of the English course by undertaking this evaluation of the 1st quarter of the academic year 2015/2016 of 1st year students of Annaba Economics and Business School.

This investigation has allowed us to draw a clear picture about this population as far as their understanding of 1st quarter English courses are concerned. Thanks to this study, we can plan now a make up program in which we can cover all their weaknesses and difficulties encountered during the different courses they have studied till now.

What should be noted about the difficulties they encountered during this 1st quarter is the following:

- Grasping specific terms related to business English
- Pronouncing business English terms
- Coping with the way of teaching especially when the teacher of English speaks too fast and does not translate to Arabic the difficult words.

Hence the remedy that will be planned should cover these difficulties that we have just detected from our investigation findings. We think that this remedy is possible even without a make up program. In fact a small time from the session can be dedicated to these points every time and gradually. The teacher of English can also cover them through homework. He can ask them to record at home their pronunciation of the difficult terms and he meets them at class to evaluate this recording. This is for pronunciation difficulties and for grasping the difficult words of business English he can ask them from time to time to look for them at home using internet or business dictionary.

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