

## Active Learning through a Task-Based ESP Syllabus for Algerian Archaeology Students

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### Abstract

Learning the English language is essential for archaeologists as they need to be good at communicating with an extensive range of audiences. This paper aims to design an English for Specific Purposes syllabus since there is no appropriate English syllabus that fits students' needs in the field, the researcher looked for the English language needs and the ESP syllabus that would respond to the students' requirements. This study employed a case study of seven Archaeology Master One students at Tlemcen University (Algeria) to investigate this research. First, these students' needs were identified and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively through a questionnaire and three structured interviews. The findings in this research permit the researcher to suggest an English course with appropriate syllabus and adequate tasks. The results revealed that in terms of learning needs, archaeology students were highly motivated to learn English, yet they lacked self-confidence. Regarding the target needs, archaeology students needed to develop the four language skills and required to complete appropriate English language tasks to achieve communicative purposes. Therefore, the researcher suggested task-based ESP syllabus to answer students' English language needs in the field.

**Keywords:** Archaeology students, language skills, needs analysis, needs identification, task-based ESP syllabus

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## Introduction

English is governing the world of education, trade, tourism, business, and archaeology with the emergence of globalization on one hand and technology on the other hand. Education is witnessing remarkable changes by administering English in all fields to make ESP students communicate effectively in the target situation, gain knowledge, and promote global understanding. Technology is another way that empowers English in the world of international education and communication and the field of archaeology is no exception.

Archaeologists are often required to use English to communicate orally in specific workplaces like Museums, archaeological sites, and tourist places to transmit to the world the richness of different areas. In fact, archaeology students need English for both professional and academic purposes; they need to develop their language skills with a particular focus on their field of study to carry out research and fieldwork activities. Concerning this study, the researcher detected anomalies within the ESP course taught to archaeology students, observed that the English language needs do not fit students' requirements and noticed that the ESP syllabus does not suit Master one students. Hence, this research plan an ESP syllabus with adequate tasks based on the needed English language skills to help archaeology students achieve an English proficiency level in the field.

The English language is taught in different fields in Algerian higher education. It is the language of science and technology through which learners can accomplish some tasks that are considered fundamental aspects for the development of their studies. Students need to develop the four language skills to read documents and books in English in the specialized field, write in English related to their field of study, listen and speak the language to communicate effectively in real-life situations. To achieve all this, the researcher conducted a need analysis dealing with first-year archaeology Master's students at the university to identify students' English language needs based on the language skills used and blended learning application in the ESP course. This study aims to:

1. Describe the current teaching situation of the ESP course dealing with the content of the English course for archaeology students.
2. Detect and analyse the ESP needs of archaeology students.
3. Look for the integration of blended learning in the English course and its role in promoting the success of the ESP course to enhance archaeology students' knowledge and increase the use of technology in the field.
4. Design and Establish a needs-based ESP syllabus for archaeology students referring to the four English language skills.

The present paper focuses on the design of an appropriate ESP syllabus for Master One students at the Department of archaeology at the University of Tlemcen through raising the following research questions:

1. What are the English language needs of archaeology students?
2. What ESP syllabus would answer the needs of these students?

To answer the above questions, this study first goes through the literature review to have an idea about the needs, tasks, and blended learning in relation to the ESP field. Second, it identifies and analyses students' English language needs to obtain finally the findings that permit the researcher to design an adequate ESP syllabus with appropriate tasks that cover the four language skills.

## Literature Review

### *ESP Definition*

Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) indorses students to acquire and use English to reach specific needs in their area of specialism. In addition, it helps them to develop a proficiency levels in English to be able to communicate effectively in the target situations. In this respect, Chen (1994: 80) maintains that ESP is “ a major specialization within the discipline of English language teaching.” It means that, ESP learners use the language to reach objectives in the target situation based on specific needs.

However, one crucial step before the ESP syllabus design is Needs Identification and Analysis. ESP teaching is a process that combines elements to progress ELT. These elements are as follows “(...) needs analysis, course (and syllabus) design, materials selection (and production), teaching and learning, and evaluation” (Dudley-Evans & Johns 1998, p. 121).

### *The Importance of Tasks in an ESP Course*

In an ESP situation, learning through tasks offers favorable motivating conditions for students as they will carry out assignments relevant to their future academic or professional careers. Samuda and Bygate (2008) defined a task as “A task is a holistic activity which engages language use in order to achieve some non-linguistic outcome while meeting a linguistic challenge, with the overall aim of promoting language learning, through process or product or both” (p. 69). When dealing with the course in TBLT classrooms, the task is a fundamental element since designing tasks helps students to cope with real-life situations and leads them to be active communicators when using the target language. TBLT promotes students with active learning which makes learners take a big role to develop interactive and communicative activities when performing tasks to reach an outcome (Bygate et al., 2001; Ellis, 2003; Prabhu, 1987; Robinson, 2011; Skehan, 1998).

In an ESP environment, communicative tasks have an effective outcome; that is to obtain a visible performance during evaluation from various phases of the Task-based learning framework. Tasks should include oral and written activities executed by individuals or groups of learners to reach effective interaction and exchange of ideas.

### *Task-Based Syllabus*

Long (1985, 2015) maintains that the syllabus should be conceptualized, organized, and assessed in terms of tasks. Long’s approach is based on the ability to perform specific tasks. Syllabuses aimed at language competence of any kind must face the fact that language development is a holistic, organic, and variable process that is difficult to assess in terms of fixed stages which are the same for all learners. Syllabuses are aimed to complete specific real-world tasks at work or in everyday life, which the learners use to do inside the classroom for direct preparations of real-world studies. According to Long (2015), there is a goal behind selecting pedagogical tasks for the syllabus, which promote appropriate coverage of each task type that guarantees that learners will develop and improve the skills needed to complete the target tasks they want to achieve.

### *Blended Learning in an ESP Context*

It is highly challenging for educators to choose suitable methods of teaching and implement them in the educational system to cover all students’ needs and to scope better results.

Face-to-face teaching took a big part in the teaching/learning processes for many years and still has its place among teachers and learners, but the development of technology has brought a new method of teaching named 'blended learning' that combines face-to-face and on-line learning. The term 'blended learning' has become the speech of every individual and it refers to the combination of "on-line and face-to-face formats to create a more effective learning experience" (Brew, 2008, p. 98). In the same vein, Krasnova (2015) defined it as a teaching method used that met teachers and students through using face-to-face teaching and on-line interaction to give students the possibility to use technology-based materials and create self-learning. It means that blended learning refers to joining both methods of teaching that lead to the use of technology and computer-mediated elements.

### *Needs Identification and Analysis*

The association between ESP and needs analysis would make the existence of an ESP course that fits students' needs to achieve specific purposes. ESP course designers rely on needs identification first, then needs analysis to determine the skills that ESP students need to use in specific situations. Need is all that a group of learners aims to reach at the end of the course. In this regard, Dickinson (1991) defines needs as "a certain skill or object that a person considers important but does not have or possess" (p. 90).

Needs analysis has a vital role in syllabus design. According to Hutchinson and Water (1987), the creation of the course relies on needs analysis as one of the parameters that helps the course designer to know what students need in the English course and why students need to learn English (reasons). Needs analysis benefits the teacher in collecting the necessary data from tracing the requirements of the learners. Michael West uses the term needs analysis to "cover what learners will be required to do with the foreign language in the target situation and how learners might best master the language during the period of learning" (Rahman, 2015, p. 25).

### **Methods**

The investigator uses a case study research to identify and analyze the needs of first-year Master's students learning English in the Department of Archaeology at Tlemcen University, Algeria in 2020. The case study is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2003, p.13). Case study research helps the researcher have a clear understanding of a specific phenomenon in a real-life situation, it permits to have a comprehensive description of the studied subject, and it leads to an intensive study by giving a whole picture of the event, object, unit, and person.

### *Participants*

Participants are the most crucial phase in the research process; the researcher obtains information to conduct her research and uses a probability sample to give each participant the possibility to be selected. The sampling is a simple random sampling that guarantees the collection of detailed data. Each informant provides evidence about the ESP situation in the archaeology department and the student's needs during the English course. The following table summarises the profiles of seven archaeology students, one ESP teacher, six subject specialists, and seven workplace managers (Table one).

Table 1. *Participants and their profile*

Participants	Profile
Seven archaeology students	They are Master's students, ages between 23 and 30 years old, and they all study archaeology at the University.
One ESP teacher	She has a Licence degree in English, then a Magister in Translation, she has 21 years of English teaching experience, and 15 years in the archaeology department.
Six subject specialists	Subject specialists were chosen randomly: three men and three women. Teaching experience ranges between five and 29 years. All subject specialists teach different modules at the department of Archaeology at Tlemcen University.
Seven workplace managers	They were two women; working in an old Palace at the center of town, and two other women and three men Working in the Museum. Their work experience ranges between 4 and 12 years.

### **Research Instruments**

To gather data, the researchers opted for two research instruments: a questionnaire and a structured interview to collect the necessary information and to have a clear understanding of the studied phenomenon. The researcher addressed a questionnaire to archaeology students, it consists of two types of questions; close-ended questions that require the informants to answer by 'yes' or 'no' questions and multiple-choice questions that involve a list of responses to be selected by the respondents to provide quantitative data. She also conducted a structured interview with the ESP teacher, the second with subject specialists, and the third with workplace managers (See Appendix A).

### **Research Procedures**

This study goes through three phases: First, the researcher collected the data from the research instruments, the second phase deals with NIA to determine archaeology students' English language needs and the third deals with the findings below:

### **Findings**

This part deals with the findings collected from the three research instruments used in this study. The researcher identified all informants 'responses based on students' target needs and learning needs to reach the objective required in this research.

### **Target Needs**

The following part unveils what students need to do with the English language in the target situation, and putting these needs under three components: necessities, lacks, and wants (Hutchinson & Water, 1987).

**Lacks**

Lacks are the gap between what archaeology students know about the existing proficiency and the target proficiency. The results are as follows:

*Students' Lacks*

The language level difficulty:

This question deals with students' proficiency when expressing themselves in English, either in speaking or writing. The findings revealed that all seven students had problems in communication during the English course. The following table shows the levels at which students found difficulties (Table two).

Table 2. *Students' level of difficulty in expressing themselves*

Level of Difficulty	N% of Students
Pronunciation	4
Finding Words	4
Constructing Sentences (Grammar)	4
Speaking about Culture	5

It appears that more than half of the informants had pronunciation difficulties. The exact number of students had deficiencies in finding words and constructing sentences in English. The majority of students claimed that speaking about culture in English was a difficult task.

*Archaeologists' Lacks*

Problems archaeologists meet:

This part looks for the difficulties and deficiencies archaeologists met in the English language. This would help to have a perspective of what to implement for archaeology students to avoid the following insufficiencies presented in this analysis (Table three).

Table 3. *Problems archaeologists meet in English*

Problems	N of archaeologists / AF
In understanding spoken English	6
In understanding written English	2
In speaking English	7
In writing English	2

This table reports that all seven archaeologists found problems in speaking English and six among them met difficulties in understanding spoken English. Two out of seven archaeologists claimed to have obstacles when dealing with the writing skill either through writing or experience written texts.

**Wants**

The results of students' and Managers' wants were necessary for the researcher to point out the needed language skills to be developed in both situations workplaces and English classrooms.

*Students' Wants*

Language level to develop:

The previous table shows that four archaeology students like to develop their pronunciation of English; this means that students want to improve their English speaking. Other respondents like

in progressing their level in terms of knowledge of vocabulary and sentence construction. Answers show that archaeology students want to advance their English language level (Table four).

Table 4. *The language level students want to develop*

Language Level to Develop	N of Students
Pronunciation	4
Knowledge of Vocabulary	3
Sentence Construction (Grammar)	3

The skill/s to develop

This figure shows that archaeology students are conscious of what they want to learn in the English course, and it is revealed in their answers. Five of the students opted for the speaking skill and maintained that it's the language skill they want to develop most. Three students out of seven selected the writing skill as an English skill they like to improve in their studies (Figure one).

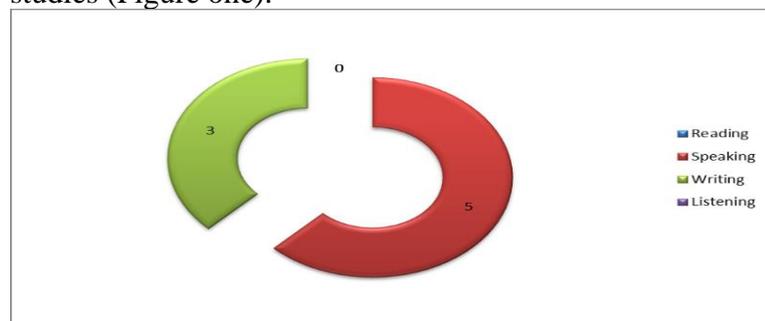


Figure 1. The skill/skills students like to develop

Tasks to be provided in the English course:

Not all the students responded to this question; only, three archaeology students claimed that the implementation of oral and written tasks to be added as the primary requests in the English syllabus.

Managers' Wants

The language level to develop:

The figure below showed that all the respondents wanted to construct sentences to speak or write in English, five out of seven liked to improve their pronunciation, and four of them selected finding words as a primary element to communicate in the workplace (Figure two).

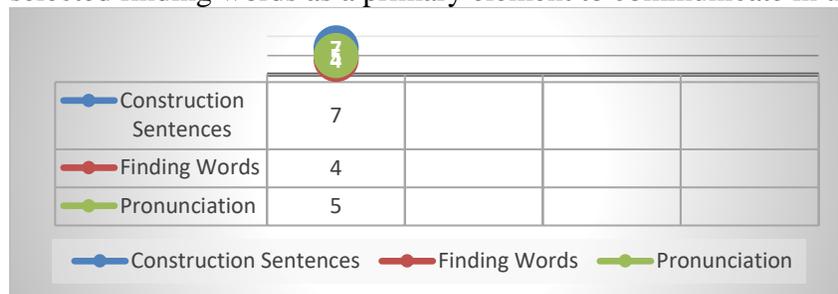


Figure 2. The language level archaeologists want to develop

The English language skill to develop:

Six archaeologists chose the speaking skill as the English language skill they needed to develop, and only one respondent claimed that none of the skills was essential for him.

### *Necessities*

The two preceding questions summarize the necessities that archaeology students need. The following part focuses on the English language skills and the tasks to develop.

The skill/s students need to develop in the English course:

The results clearly showed that all the subject specialists perceived that archaeology students need to develop their reading skill in the English course. They expressed the same reasons that students need some readings about the archaeology field to enhance their knowledge, learn different terminologies, and acquire the English language. The speaking skill is also one of the skills that leads archaeology students to use English in conferences, communication, or workplaces. As revealed by subject specialists, most investigations were in written forms, and students need to develop some proficiency in writing because they need it when presenting written research at university, or awarding leaflets, and exposing advertisements in their workplace (Figure three).

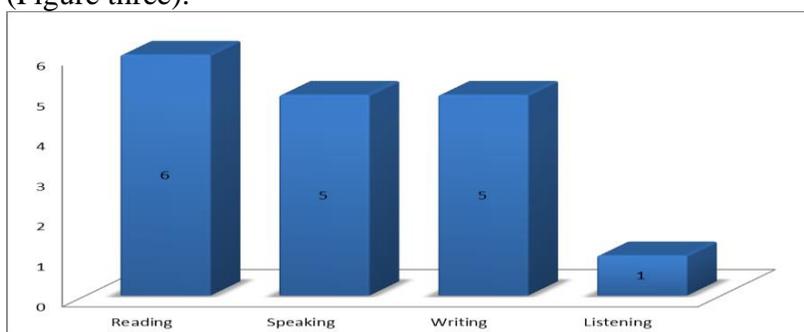


Figure 3. The skills do students need to develop in the English course  
Tasks students need to complete in English:

The subject specialists revealed that archaeology students should know how to describe prehistoric monuments in a written way, from the statues, buildings, pillars, tombs, obelisks, etc. In addition to making reports on museums, treasuries, and Islamic decorations either in written or spoken forms. The reading tasks would help archaeology students to complete all the previous functions in English.

### *Suggestions*

The managers' suggestions presented in this analysis would help to promote the researcher with some strategies to make the English course more critical to the students and improve it.

#### *Elements to Include in the ESP Syllabus to Improve the English Course*

All Archaeologists recommended some essentials in the ESP syllabus to improve students' proficiency level of English. To do so, five archaeologists set to have English lectures that had a relationship with the field of archaeology, dealing with more theory than practice; for example, teachers had to avoid translation into the three languages and omit texts with questions to answer. Besides, teachers needed to include more speaking tasks that help students to reach fluency while interacting with foreigners and provide more written functions that allow them to produce leaflets in English. All this would not be possible if the time allocated to teach English is one hour and a

half a week. In addition, two archaeologists proposed to change the entire syllabus because English teachers dealt with the same program designed to teach students at high school.

### ***Learning Needs***

This part of the needs analysis allowed the researcher to see whether some elements were the reasons for students' improvement or deterioration in English. The researcher looked for the time allocated to teach English as an element to detect students' learning needs.

#### *Time Allocated to Teach English*

The researcher noticed that all subject specialists claimed that the time allocated to teach English to archaeology students is insufficient; more hours of English would benefit students with knowledge and information about the field of archaeology. Subject specialists suggested extra training sessions in English, and administration has to programme new timetables. It is also essential to establish a partnership with the English department; this would give students the opportunity to be taught by English teachers with different specialties and have more sessions in English. Another teacher proposed adding other modules in English for archaeology students.

### **Discussion**

To answer the two research questions, the researchers undertook a needs analysis following the model of Hutchinson and Water (1987) that includes target needs based on necessities, lacks and wants, and learning needs. Students' needs were, then, identified and analyzed. The first research question asks about students' English language needs, and the findings showed that archaeology students have a poor knowledge of English in all language levels, which makes archaeology students need to develop the four language skills by the incorporation of lessons based on the reading skill. Reading studies will help students acquire a bank word of terminologies, and construct various types of sentences when writing assignments, and articles of other archaeological areas. Moreover, reading is the skill that makes students more fluent in using the language and enables them to monitor English in workplaces and museums in front of tourists to build communicative competence. Archaeology students cannot produce correct sentences in English, and this, prevents them from using English in specific written studies, similar as: creating booklets and describing artifacts with all the treasures and objects set up in the museums. Finally, it appears that teachers do not use blended learning in teaching archaeology students though blended learning enables students have more English sessions to complete the needed assignments, and learn the language skills through using technology.

Concerning the ESP syllabus, the informants confirm the absence of an adequate syllabus that would answer students' needs in the field; this, lead the researcher to design Task-Based syllabus for Master One archaeology students based on the task selection and sequencing, Long' suggestion (2015). The researcher designed a set of tasks based on some factors that make the lessons more or less motivating, like the number of elements (steps), task components, and the time allocated. The researcher summarizes the syllabus, along with the suggested readings and actions (see appendix B).

### **Research Limitations**

It appears from the richness and success of this study some limitations. The researcher faced obstacles during the collection of data from the part of the informants, it was like causing stress and disturbing them, which made the researcher anxious about her work. The researcher

have difficulty in analysing students' English language level because they were not serious in their responses and did not answer all the questions in the questionnaire. The last point, the English teacher disagree to implement the syllabus designed by the researcher to continue her research. She proposed to include it to another group of students, which was inappropriate since the needs analysis in this research dealt with archaeology students.

### Conclusion

To sum up, the current research aimed to design an ESP syllabus for Master One students at the Department of archaeology at the University of Tlemcen (Algeria). The researcher sheds light on the urgent need for interactive tasks in the English course for archaeology students to familiarize them with real-life communication. Technologies in the ESP tasks play a significant role to reinforce ESP students' use of English and raise their motivation and self-confidence in the ESP course and at workplaces. Therefore, improving the English course through the design of a task-based syllabus will help archaeology students perform better in the field of work and in an academic context.

### Recommendations

The researcher recommends teaching English in the field of ESP through the development of the four language skills and proposes to add more English hours to enrich students' knowledge. ESP teachers are not proficient in teaching ESP, and special training would be beneficial for them to make ESP learners acquire the needed skills. Collaboration between teachers is missing in the Department of Archaeology, so the researcher suggests teamwork that joins ESP teachers and subject specialists to design ESP courses. Finally, it is essential to look at the content of the ESP course and make some revisions based on conducting the needs analysis process to be aware of students' needs.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Research instruments used in NIA

Instruments	The objective of each one
A questionnaire For Archaeology students	looking for: Students' use of the English language. Students' comprehension of the English language. Students' proficiency level in the English language. Students' English language difficulties. Students' language skills and tasks needed.
The first structured interview For ESP teachers	dealing with: The content, syllabus and teaching materials of the English course. The English language skills needed.

	<p>Students' difficulties and proficiency level.                  Strategies to improve students' proficiency in ESP.                  Tasks implemented.                  Use of online teaching.                  Time allocated.</p>
<p>The second structured interview                  For subject specialists</p>	<p>based on the following points:                  The relationship between various courses.                  Cultural aspects implemented in the English course.                  The skills students need to develop.                  Students' difficulties.                  Tasks students need to complete.                  Time and coefficient allocated to the English course.                  Use of online teaching.</p>
<p>The third structured interview                  For workplace managers</p>	<p>addressed the following points:                  Use of English at workplaces.                  Interaction with English speakers.                  Difficulties they face when expressing themselves                  and at which level.                  Ability to speak and write in English.                  Knowledge about one's own culture in English.                  Appropriateness of the English courses for                  workplace manager's needs.                  Deficiencies in the English course.                  Language proficiency level and language skills                  needed.                  Suggestions.</p>

**Appendix B**

**Identification of archaeology students' needs**

Students' needs	Students' needs	Needed tasks and actions
Target Needs	<p>Lacks:                      Students lack the four language skills and more importantly reading</p>	<p>Reading                      Writing</p> <p>Read texts related to archaeology (acquire the field-specific jargon)</p> <p>- Write a report and articles in English                      - Produce a leaflet in English                      - Describe a monument or artifact in English</p>

	Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Listen to dialogues in real-life situations.</li> <li>-Pay attention to archaeologists' terminologies and their pronunciation.</li> <li>-Listening to conversations in English of archaeologists and their students.</li> </ul>
	Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe a monument or artifact in English orally with correct pronunciation.</li> <li>- Communicate in English in workplaces (Museums or art centers)</li> </ul>
Wants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Reinforce grammatical knowledge</li> <li>-Acquire the vocabulary related to the field of archaeology</li> <li>- Communicate successfully</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Tasks to construct sentences in English (archaeological texts to summarize, typical report to follow)</li> <li>-Provide students with articles or reports to read and ask them to pick up the terms and materials used in the archaeology field.</li> <li>-Oral tasks are needed, like practicing and completing dialogues.</li> <li>-Construct conversation using archaeology terms.</li> <li>- Online conversations between archaeology students and English archaeologists.</li> <li>-Practicing English at workplaces.</li> </ul>
Necessities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learn English through the combination of courses via traditional methods on one side and e-learning on another side.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Observe monuments and artifacts using 3D, then describe them orally and provide a written report.</li> <li>-Archaeology students review archaeology in movies like the famous one' Raiders of the Lost Ark' by Indian Jones (1981). Then, they have to analyze everything they observe orally.</li> </ul>
Blended learning incorporation		

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Learning Needs	Methodological Needs	- Allocate more teaching time	-Combination of online and face-to-face teaching.
	Psychological Needs	-Use appropriate teaching materials -Raise students' motivation	-Teaching materials like: Videos, 3D applications, and films. -Raise the course coefficient. -Programme workplace management
	Sociological Needs	-Create teamwork Between the English teacher, subject specialists, and workplace managers.	-Regular meetings between English teachers and subject specialists. - workshops including teachers, students, and workplace managers.

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