Dental Students' Perceptions of ESP Material and its Impact on Their Language Proficiency: A Case Study of a Saudi Arabian University

Uzma M Hashmi

AlFarabi Dentistry and Nursing College
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Hussam Rajab

English Language Institute
King Abdulaziz University
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Asrar Ehsan Sindi

AlFarabi Dentistry and Nursing College
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

The paper aims to explore the dental English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students' perceptions of the ESP material and its influence on their English proficiency in the dentistry department of a Saudi Arabian university. The study adopts a qualitative technique of semi-structured interviews to elicit the views of 12 purposively chosen participants. The process of a thematic analysis of the qualitative data led to the emergence of three overarching themes that aimed to answer the main research question which is how the dental students in the Saudi context perceive the ESP materials and the impact these materials have on their language proficiency. The key findings indicate that the ESP learners in the dentistry department have a very positive attitude towards learning the English language in general and ESP in particular. Their awareness of their linguistic needs makes it a significant study in the field of ESP in Saudi Arabia. The results also suggest that the coursebook contents and material are outdated and inappropriate for the ESP learners in the Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. The findings illustrate that the ESP teachers need to use the English language in classrooms and introduce learner-centred interactive activities to encourage students to participate in classroom activities. In light of the findings, the study outlines the implications and gives directions for future research.

Keywords: English proficiency, English for specific purposes (ESP), EFL context, Saudi Arabia

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