

Evaluation of English for Specific Purposes Textbooks by Medical Sciences Students at the University of Limpopo: A Needs Analysis approach

Themba Makhubele

University of Limpopo, South Africa
Department of Languages
themba.makhubele@ul.ac.za

Tebogo Kekana

University of Limpopo, South Africa
Department of Languages
tebogo.kekana@ul.ac.za

Mphoto Mogoboya

University of Limpopo, South Africa
Department of Languages
mphoto.mogoboya@ul.ac.za

Abstract

There is already a myriad of evidence in the literature to show that when it comes to Teaching and Learning materials that are tailored to the discipline, lecturers find it challenging. This problem is mostly prevalent in historically black universities in South Africa and this due to several reasons. One of the reasons is that these lecturers are not well trained in developing relevant materials as stipulated in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) protocols. This article offers a brief discussion of the current situation under COVID-19 pandemic in the higher education. After a brief account of the general status quo regarding how lecturers are trained in SA, the article focuses on the main thrusts of the document: evaluation of English learning textbooks. The aim of this article is to explore, identify and analyses of the variables that hampers effective selection of relevant textbooks to teach English in medical sciences during the pandemic. Thus, this qualitative study that uses an exploratory design sought to explore, identify, examine and analyse the variables that impact on successful selection of relevant English Teaching Textbooks in the Medical Sciences departments at a specifically selected university. Data were elicited using a questionnaire and in-depth interviews with a sample of a group of 2 lecturers and 30 students utilising convenient sampling. Discriminant Function Analysis indicated a myriad sixteen interrelated variables. Variables included training of lecturers that is not adequate and lack of ESP tailored materials. Furthermore, the study used Genre theory, Needs Analysis framework and Schema theory as its linchpin. An analysis of the data revealed the following key findings: The findings may help lecturers who teach Teaching Methodologies in Education, trainers and instructors on how to best train lecturers and lecturers on how to produce teaching and learning materials that is relevant and adequate.

Keywords: COVID-19; English for Specific Purpose; Higher-Education; Textbooks, Learning; Pedagogy; Medical Science

1. Introduction

The issue of relevant and efficient teaching and learning materials throughout the educational journey of every learner is of major consequence. As Hutchinson and Torres (1994:315) states: "...no teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook". For example, lecturers who are assigned to teach English language to students in other departments such as Health Sciences departments are found not to be trained linguist (C.f. Camenson, 2007). Challenges such as these highlight why the issue of relevant and efficient teaching and learning materials in a conducive teaching and learning material is so vital. Howie, Venter and Van Staden (2008: 559) state seems to be in agreement with the above-mentioned challenge when they asseverate as follows: 'The majority of pupils receiving instruction in English, when English is not their mother tongue, face grave challenges in education'. Furthermore, a proliferation of reports about the irrelevant ESP teaching and learning materials in various institutions is indeed a cause for concern. Strange and Hall (2005) in their study found that there is an ostensible need for the evaluation of materials used in teaching. Hutchinson (1987) defined evaluation as a "matter of judging the fitness of something for a particular purpose". Thus, evaluating the suitability of textbooks in the intended programme or curriculum is of paramount importance. In response to the above-mentioned quagmire, this article sought to evaluate the ESP textbooks utilised by lecturers and students in the Health Sciences at the University of Limpopo in Limpopo Province. To achieve this aim, the study formulated the below mentioned research objectives, namely:

The primary research question in this study is:

Are textbooks meant to teach English for Medical Sciences students at the University of Limpopo relevant, adequate and effective, and if not, why?

The secondary research questions are:

- What are English challenges faced by lecturers and facilitators in the teaching of English for Medical Sciences at the University of Limpopo?
- What are lecturers and facilitators' perceptions of their knowledge and competence when it comes to textbook selection and materials development?
- What is the process of selecting textbooks that are meant to teach English for students in the programme called Medical Sciences at the University of Limpopo?

Given the prevalence of a plethora of readily available, published textbooks and developed instructional materials and their potential impact on student achievement, the purpose of this study was to encourage educators to examine carefully the processes by which they select materials and, more specifically, the procedures they use to evaluate the materials. The researchers strongly believe that information collected from the results of this study will help enhance the training of students in Health Departments in the University and the South African Health sphere at large. Furthermore, this study will identify probable factors encumbering the selection of relevant, suitable and efficient ESP textbooks in Health Sciences at the selected university.

2. Literature Review

It is an indisputable truth that research studies across the globe revealed that the problem of utilising irrelevant and sometimes ineffective textbooks and other instructional materials persist even up to today. According to Stein, Stuen, Carnine and Long (2001:07) literature has shown that relatively little research has been conducted on the textbook adoption process, it is found that most research about the adoption process was written between 10 and 15 years ago. This paucity of literature poses a great threat to this area. Mukundan and Ahour (2010) accentuate the problem by mentioning that most of the checklists for textbook evaluation are qualitative than quantitative and this is one of the problems in this area of research. Mukundan, Hajimohammadi, Nimehchisalem (2011:22) lament that 'most of these checklists are either too short or too long and some criteria in them are vague, so they do not thoroughly meet the requirements of a good and applicable instrument for evaluation purposes. Yasemin (2009) in his study evaluated three English textbooks taught in state schools in Turkey and found that textbooks are relevant to a certain extent for students for whom they are applied. In addition to the above, Ruben (2010) in his study about textbook evaluation found that most textbooks failed to meet the expected content standards outlined in the educational profile of the courses. Furthermore, Nasiri and Ahmadi (2011) assessed the suitability of textbooks for university students. In their study, it emerged that those various aspects of textbooks do not adequately capture literature suitable for Medical Sciences students.

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, the other issue complicating the investigated problem is that most of the teachers or lecturers in Health Sciences are not trained linguists, this creates a challenge on pedagogy because textbook selection and evaluation has a direct impact on teaching procedures (C.f. Ariebowo, 2014).

The above reviewed literature shows the importance of textbook evaluation in a teaching and learning environment. According to Zhuang, Tran and Ho (2018) textbook evaluation is very important because language barriers can contribute to miscommunication and present a barrier to care in Medical Sciences. To highlight this problem further, Lompardo (1988) in his study regarding Medicine students at Wayne State University found that there was a mismatch between medical knowledge and English prowess.

From the submission by Mukundan (2011), the evaluation of textbooks was done mainly for two reasons. Firstly, evaluation helped programme developers or lecturers in making proper decisions when selecting the appropriate textbook. Secondly, through evaluation, lecturers were able to easily identify the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook. This normally placed lecturers or programme developers at advantage point where they could easily adapt to the material in their future instructions. Additionally, Razmjoo and Raissi (2010) infer that textbook evaluation assisted lecturers to go beyond impressionistic explorations where they grasp accurate, useful contextual insights into the broad-based nature of the textbook

Kang (2004) posits that the fact that medical information is instructed in English serves as a prerequisite for medical professionals to learn the language. Kurfurst (2004) also underlies that learning English is very important for medical professionals simply because the information available in journal articles, books and other texts are commanded in the language.

The issue of relevant and adequate English communication in Medical Sciences in SA has been raised since 1979 wherein researchers such as Nash (1979) once argued: “Many writers have expressed concern at the quality of communication between doctors and patients and whether or not this was being specifically covered in medical student training”.

Van Wyk (2016) avers that the importance of English communication in fields such as Medical Sciences was also emphasised not only internationally, but also in SA universities. Contextually, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) considered the role of a communicator as it adopted a catalogue of competencies for Medical Sciences students as contemplated in the catalogue of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada Physician Competencies (Can MEDS) (Diab, Mathews & Gokool, 2016).

Rahimy (2008) explored medical terminology and the extent to which the pronunciation practice, grammatical points, lexicons and illustration of the required skills are underpinned in textbooks. In the end, he investigated the compatibility of English textbooks for Medical Sciences. Furthermore, Razmjoo and Raisi (2010) assessed ESP textbooks for students of Medical Sciences universities published by SAMT organisation where they conducted a survey amongst students and lecturers focusing on practical considerations, organisational features, vocabulary, language skills and theoretical considerations. The results that emerged revealed that most participants were not satisfied in that terrain. Another evaluation for ESP textbooks was conducted by Ghalandari and Talebnejad (2012). The focal point was on Medical Sciences students in Shiraz Medical School. Their studies were based on Hutchinson and Waters’ (1987) framework. At the end of the evaluation, they compared the content of textbooks with students’ needs.

3. Theoretical Approach

Determining and identifying the probable courses of inefficient, relevant textbooks and instructional materials through lecturers’ perceptions was key to this investigation. Therefore, this study adopted a needs analysis study drawing on the principles of Needs Analysis (NA) framework advocated by proponents such as Munby (1978), Hutchison and Waters (1987), Hutchinson (1988), Nation (2000) and Richards (2001). NA is viewed by these scholars as a structured information gathering procedure which allows the personnel tasked with the work of developing and teaching a course or module to develop a detailed specification of what the course or module will entail and for what purpose and as well as explaining the circumstances under which that course or module will be taught. This framework was deemed relevant to this study because of its approach to issues of ‘needs’ and ‘wants’ and how it has been trusted by many researchers in projects like this one. The other important theory in the development of the conceptual framework in this project was Genre theory. According to Bhatia (2004:23), genre refers to language use in a conventionalised communicative setting in order to give expression to a specific set of communicative goals of a disciplinary or social institution. This theory was relevant because the study interrogated issues around ‘textbook relevance’ in a specific environment of teaching and learning. Thus, the researchers draw most of its principles to give this study a grounding. Because of the use of this conceptual framework, the issues of

reliability and validity were taken care of in this project. Thus, this framework was relevant and pivotal in providing a solid grounding to this study.

4. Research Methodology

A research methodology is the procedural application of rules and appraisal of research methods and the authentication of the data gathered, where the research design serves as the plan (See, Creswell, 2009). In this study, a mixed research approach was followed. This approach was chosen given its reliability in providing a holistically view to an investigated phenomena rather than a one-sided view. In support of this view, Babbie and Mouton (2012) maintain that a research methodology is a process whereby methods, techniques and procedures are utilised to implement the research design, underlying principles and assumptions. The data collection in this study took place in two phases. The first phase discussed the data collected from the evaluation checklist along with questionnaires because of their relation. The second phase followed, which discussed the data collected from interviews. Thus, qualitative data was collected using semi structured interviews whose participants included both Medical Sciences students and their lecturers. The data was audiotaped in progress and the recordings were captured and saved in a coded folder in the researcher's computer. In other to evaluate the textbooks for relevance and efficiency an instrumental checklist developed by Mukundan (2011) was utilised. This checklist was used for its reliability and validity aspect. This instrumental checklist has been initiated to evaluate textbooks following the matching process. On the other hand, quantitative data was collected using questionnaires which were distributed to available Medical Sciences students who attended and passed the module HENG011 (provide a full name) in the academic year 2019.

Furthermore, the interviews in this study intended to help the researchers gain a deeper understanding of the medical interviewees' views of L2 reading motivation. In this interview, some predetermined questions were posed with considerable flexibility concerning follow-up answers relevant to the students' learning experience. Their responses, then, were examined carefully for clues as to what question to ask next, or whether it was important to ask for additional information (see, Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). To analyse the data obtained from the questionnaires, which consisted of 51 Likert-type items, descriptive statistics (such as mean, percentage, frequency, and standard deviation) was conducted in SPSS version18 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL). The internal consistency of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. The interview results were also analysed and interpreted qualitatively. As mentioned earlier, in this study, a sample was drawn from a population of 30 (Thirty) students who have gone and passed the module called HENG011 in the academic year 2019 and 2 (Two) lecturers teaching English language in the Medical Sciences Department at the University of Limpopo. A non-probability sampling method was used for the students and this among other things was due to protocols of COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Results

This section delineates compressed but detailed results of this study.

5.1 Textbook data analysis and Questionnaire's analysis

This first phase of data was collected from questionnaires, which were distributed to two lecturers and 25 English Medical Sciences students who enrolled for HENG011 in the academic year 2019 at University of Limpopo. The results of this portion are presented in TABLE 1.1 below.

Table 1.1 Results of Textbook Evaluation Checklist and Questionnaires

No.	Criteria	Score					Total No: of Students (%)
		5 (%)	4 (%)	3 (%)	2 (%)	1 (%)	
General Attributes							
A.	The textbook in relation to syllabus and curriculum						
1	It matches with the specifications of the syllabus	-	-	-	4 (31%)	9 (69%)	13 (100%)
B.	Methodology						
2	The activities can be exploited fully and can embrace the various methodologies in ESP	13 (100%)	-	-	-	-	13 (100%)
3	Activities can work well with methodologies in ESP	13 (100%)	-	-	-	-	13 (100%)
C.	Suitability to students						
4	It is compatible with background knowledge and level of students	-	10 (77%)	3 (33%)	-	-	13 (100%)
5	It is culturally accessible to the students	-	-	8 (62%)	5 (38%)	-	13 (100%)
6	It is compatible with the needs of students	-	-	-	13 (100%)	-	13 (100%)
7	It is compatible with the interests of students	-	-	-	13 (100%)	-	13 (100%)
D.	Physical and utilitarian attributes						
8	Its layout is attractive	9 (69%)	4 (31%)	-	-	-	13 (100%)
9	It indicates efficient use of text and visuals	-	6 (46%)	7 (54%)	-	-	13 (100%)
E.	Efficient outlay of supplementary materials						
10	There is a lecturer's guide to aid the lecturer	-	-	-	13 (100%)	-	13 (100%)
Learning-teaching content							
A.	General						
1	Most of the tasks in the book are interesting	-	7 (54%)	6 (46%)	-	-	13 (100%)

2	Tasks move from simple to complex	13 (100%)	-	-	-	-	13 (100%)
3	Task objectives are achievable	5 (38%)	8 (62%)	-	-	-	13 (100%)
4	Cultural sensitivities have been considered	9 (69%)	4 (31%)	-	-	-	13 (100%)
5	The language in the book is natural and real	9 (69%)	4 (31%)	-	-	-	13 (100%)
6	The material is up to date	-	4 (31%)	9 (69%)	-	-	13 (100%)
7	It covers a variety of topics in ESP	-	-	-	8 (62%)	5 (38%)	13 (100%)
8	The book contains materials taken from ESP research findings	-	-	-	13 (100%)	-	13 (100%)
9	The book covers materials of writing research paper	-	-	-	13 (100%)	-	13 (100%)
B. Academic Writing							
10	Tasks have achievable goals and take students into consideration	-	10 (77%)	3 (33%)	-	-	13 (100%)
11	Models are provided for different genres	13 (100%)	-	-	-	-	13 (100%)
C. Vocabulary							
12	The load (number of new words in each lesson) is appropriate to the level	9 (69%)	4 (31%)	-	-	-	13 (100%)
13	There is a good distribution (simple to complex) of vocabulary load across chapters and the whole book	-	8 (62%)	5 (38%)	-	-	13 (100%)
14	Words are efficiently repeated and recycled across the book	-	8 (62%)	5 (38%)	-	-	13 (100%)
D. Grammar							
15	The spread of grammar is achievable	5 (38%)	8 (62%)	-	-	-	13 (100%)
16	The grammar is contextualised	-	-	7 (54%)	6 (46%)	-	13 (100%)
17	Examples are interesting	-	-	9 (69%)	4 (31%)	-	13 (100%)
18	Grammar is introduced explicitly	-	-	9 (69%)	4 (31%)	-	13 (100%)
E. Exercises							
19	They have clear instructions	13 (100%)	-	-	-	-	13 (100%)

20	They are adequate	13 (100%)	-	-	-	-	13 (100%)
21	They help students who are under/overachievers	-	9 (69%)	4 (31%)	-	-	13 (100%)

The first major point has been evaluated from the textbook entitled “Inside Track to Successful Academic Writing” written by Gillett, Hammond and Martala (2009). In this aspect, there are five aspects that were evaluated. The first aspect is the textbook in relation to syllabus and curriculum. In Table 1.1 above, it is indicated that 31% of respondents disagree with the statement that indicates the suitability of the textbook with the syllabus and curriculum of Medical Sciences ESP. 69% of respondents completely agreed. In this way, it can be concluded that the textbook matches the syllabus and curriculum of ESP module in the Medical Sciences field. Additionally, the second aspect that was dealt with was methodology. In this area, there were two statements that addressed this aspect. The statements dealt with activities in the ESP textbook whether good or not can be exploited fully and embrace various methodologies in ESP and activities that worked well with methodologies in that programme. Consequently, both the first and the second statements reached the 100% of respondents which completely agreed with both statements. Therefore, this resulted in that (methodology) is in excellent for ESP textbook. The third was the aspect of the textbook suitability to students. This aspect covered four statements, i.e., the compatibility of the textbook with the students’ background knowledge and level, the textbook’s accessibility to the culture of the students, its compatibility to the needs of students, and its compatibility to the interests of students. The findings showed that 77% of respondents agreed with the first statement, and 33% of them partly agreed. With the second statement, 62% of respondents partly agreed with the statement and 38% of them did not. With the third and fourth statements, 100% of respondents disagreed with the statements. Therefore, the conclusion is that the textbook is not suitable to Medical Sciences students since there are still some parts that do not fulfil their needs. The fourth aspect was about the physical and utilitarian attributes. This aspect involved two statements. The first statement was whether or not its layout was attractive, and the second was whether or not it indicates efficient use of texts and visuals. The results revealed that 69% of respondents completely agreed, and 31% of them disagreed with the first statement. 46% of respondents disagreed with the second statement, and 54% partly agreed with it. It has been said that the textbook has enough physical and utilitarian attributes, especially its layout. Lastly, the fifth aspect of the general attributes was supplementary materials. There was one statement from respondents that addresses this aspect. The statement was whether or not the textbook provided lecturers’ guide to assist them in using the textbook. 100% of respondents answered that there was no lecturers’ guide provided.

5.2 Analysis of Data collected from Virtual Interviews

Interviews and a survey generated the data pertaining to the Needs Analysis, ESP curriculum development, and collaborative evaluation of English for Medical Sciences programme at the

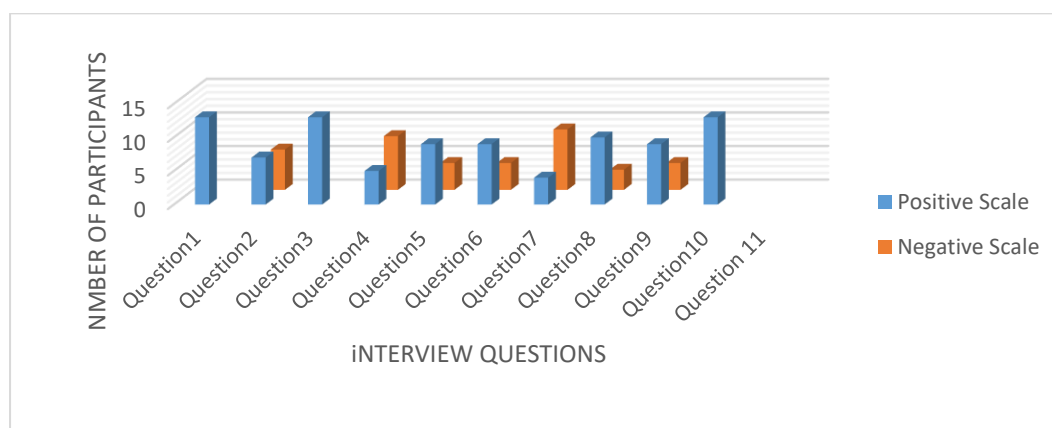
selected institution. The below TABLE1.2 below show the compressed results of the answers to the interviews

Table 1.2 Sample answers to the YES/NO interviews

Institution	Number of interviewees	YES	NO	Percentage %
Institution (UL)	13	7	6	43% Negative 57% Positive
Total	13	7	6	100% Overall

Majority of the respondents answered YES to the virtual interviews' questions and the probable reason for this was that the students were satisfied and the point that they come across different challenges. Therefore, data collected through the questionnaire is corroborated clearly by the data collected during the interviews in sense that tangible conclusion is reach with being biased on the way data was collected. It is the researcher's contention that materials should be developed and selected based on the best needs of students. The interview findings were collected from English Medical Sciences students and lecturers. The data has been coded in a way that the researcher recognised both the general problems and needs of English for Medical Sciences programme. This included the strength that the ESP programme must be more similar to checklist questions. Below the interview data graph (see Figure 1.1) is a presentation of basic areas in which participants believed the English Department is performing positively or negatively. It is in these areas where students and lecturers expressed their needs. Each number represented the number of times the a particular need was mentioned throughout the 11 different questions during the personal interview.

Figure 1.1 Overall students' needs and lecturers' needs



The above chart represents axis counts from the overall interview data as expressed by English Medical Sciences students and lecturers. The positive scale shows primary areas where participants are satisfied with the ESP module. The negative scale represents unsatisfied factors or needs of the programme as expressed by participants. As the researcher presented the overall interview data, the English department with their ESP programme provided a positive educational atmosphere and a nurturing environment for Medical Sciences students. In addition, the department also brought better English learning conditions to these Medical Sciences students.

5.3 Summary of the above compressed results

It has been shown that the students were not really satisfied with the textbook since it does not represent all their needs and curriculum for ESP in Medical Sciences. The textbook entitled “Inside Track to Successful Academic Writing” and written by Gillett, Hammond and Martala (2009), was evaluated using checklist developed by Mukundan (2011). However, the textbook was very good in some points such as the methodology, physical and utilitarian attributes, its outlay, general elements (move of the tasks, task objectives, etc.), academic writing (from paragraph writing to various essays writing), vocabulary, grammar, and exercises. Besides, if it was used for the teaching and learning of academic writing course in the General English Education Study Programme, it would be relevant with the students’ needs and curriculum. Lastly, if it was analysed further, this textbook would be more relevant to students who are at their postgraduate level or doing research for the first time.

6. Discussion

The adoption of instructional materials is partially dictated by the policies of individual departments within an institution which sometimes involves a centralized evaluation and selection process. Now, at the University of Limpopo (i.e., in the investigated department) it has been found that such a process is non-existent, and this is a recipe for disaster. Furthermore, the most significant weakness identified in the results of this study is the lack of training of lecturers serving on text-book adoption committees. According to Farr, Tulley, and Powell (1987), teachers are generally not offered any training in the evaluation of instructional materials, either in their teacher preparation programs or as members of adoption committees. A similar situation is also experienced at the University of Limpopo. The problem is further accentuated in that lecturers are often not provided release time to do the work of instructional evaluation, and this is a serious predicament to the issues of improved, adequate and relevant curriculum. The other problem identified in this study is that lecturers are not complying with the university librarians when asked to select textbooks to be ordered by the library. This is because lecturers are either lazy to do it, do not have time or they are afraid of exposing themselves that they are not aware of current textbooks or instructional materials published in their disciplines. In addition, quality assurance unit of the department in the selected institution is not involved, therefore their oversight is non-existent, and this is part of the challenge. The study has also identified lack of screening instruments for text-books evaluation in the studied department. Lack of relevant staff to execute the work is also found to be one of the challenges. For example, in English department (which is a service department to the Health Sciences

departments) which is located within the Department of Languages has only one full professor who happens to be in literature section. The language section currently does not have a single English language professor. Therefore, the work of ESP in this department is compromised (i.e., literature experts sometimes are assigned to do the work they are not trained to do). Finally, the study found a serious weakness in the adoption process which seems to be the lack of research-based criteria available for evaluating and selecting instructional materials (Farr, Tulley, & Powell, 1987; Ross, 1989; Tulley & Farr, 1990).

7. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to evaluate the textbook meant to teach English for Medical Sciences students in the programme called Medical Sciences at the University of Limpopo. It was found that the students preferred to be taught English, which is mainly focused specifically to their content of Medical Science not General English. The data also indicated that there were some negative perceptions attached to ESP module. However, the positive output was the response on how appropriate and adequate the ESP module is. The University of Limpopo not only uses English as a medium of instruction but also as the language of communication with the public and its stakeholders. Even though some lecturers do notice the language difficulties experienced by the students, the majority still prefer to use English as a language of teaching in their modules. The language practitioners raised the point that the language policy of the University of Limpopo is poorly published. They thus saw the need to make it public and certain amendments should be made.

8. Recommendations

The following are recommendations of the study:

- The first recommendation is that the University should train lecturers who are responsible for the ESP modules than to select any English lecturer randomly. They should also make amendments in the language policy that will cover ESP students and those that are doing English language from early stage of their studies.
- It is recommended that text-books evaluation process be carefully examined by the relevant selected committee. Thus, there should be a text-evaluation committee within every department in the university
- Secondly, the university should introduce ESP to different fields of study throughout the faculties as a compulsory module other than a standalone module or degree in the Department of Languages. These are some of the measures taken by international universities.
- Thirdly, the University should bring together a group of experts in ESL and ESP to select and evaluate the best textbooks for prescription by lecturers to avoid taking General English textbooks to fields that require specific English materials. All these amendments should be made to educate all stakeholders in their respective faculties and to eradicate negative perceptions about English modules in education.
- The fourth, recommendation is to encourage students to practice all language skills mainly in English.

- And lastly, Medical Sciences students should take the ESP module throughout their entire degree. Mostly, you find that they face difficulties when it comes to writing communicative laboratory reports clearly, which can lead to misdiagnosis.
- It is recommended that just like with policies which have a review date and curriculums which have re-carriculation or what is normally called curriculum review dates, textbooks used should have review dates.
- It is recommended that a screening instrument be developed. This will alleviate situations where a strong inverse (negative) relationship exists between the student performance in a specific course and the suitability levels of the textbooks used in those courses. This correlation indicates that the higher the suitability levels of the textbooks used the higher pass rate will be experienced.
- It is recommended that trained linguists should form part of the textbook selection process

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