Assessing the English Language Needs of the Senegalese Professionals Working in Business and Tourism Sectors in Saint-Louis, Senegal

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ABSTRACT

The role of English as an international language has made its teaching a growing field. Despite its unofficial status in countries like Senegal, English is used in all fields of activity. Specialization of content in English-teaching curricula is currently increasing, and authors agree that English is not to be studied simply for its own sake, but rather for its communicative uses. EFL teachers are expected to help students develop fluency in English and become familiar with the English specific to their content area, which is the main reason why the field of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) developed in contrast with General English.

Specialists have been exploring learners' needs in ESP in many parts of the world, because, as Munby (1978), Hutchinson & Waters (1987), and Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) point out, needs analysis is of primary importance in teaching ESP. However, in Senegal, there has been less research focusing on the students' learning needs. Senegalese students in content areas notice when they become job seekers that their level of English is lower than the labor market's requirements.

Using a qualitative approach, this study addresses that issue. It explores the role English plays in professional domains and assesses the learning needs for the professionals working in the fields of Business and Tourism. The purpose of this study is to help reduce the gap that currently exists between the English instructional programs and the job market's requirements in order to produce graduates that meet the labor market's expectations.

1. Introduction

These days, nobody can deny the place of English within the circle of languages being used for international communication and/or new technology, and such a situation has made its study a necessity. Research has shown that among the millions of students who have already completed a 'general' course in English, an increasing proportion wishes or needs to learn that language for particular communicative reasons connected with jobs. It indeed happens very often that people who are highly proficient in the English language encounter difficulties communicating in their jobs, and it is in response to such a situation that the study of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) developed, in contrast with general English. The role of English as an international language has indeed made ESP a growing field in French-speaking Africa. English is now taught in every college department with the goal to produce graduates who meet the requirements of their chosen field. In Senegal, where English is taught as a foreign language, the study of English is not optional and begins in middle school. Despite its unofficial status, English is used in all fields of activity and plays an important role in professional areas such as business, tourism, and science and technology. Many American or British companies are setting up in this part of the world, and a mastery of the English language is now required in most job advertisements. Professionals who now need English for written as well as oral communication for their job responsibilities are somehow obliged to study that language. However, for very practical reasons, students do not generally have the patience or the motivation to attend English lessons unless the syllabus is based on the daily communicative operations they need in their studies or in their careers (Peterson &

Zjednoczone, 1986). Although teachers are increasingly aware that there must be a relationship between training and employment, they usually do not take into account the current as well as the future requirements of the job market when designing their syllabi or developing their materials. There is indeed a sharp discrepancy between the achievements of the English instructional program and actual societal and professional needs.

Collecting English language learners' needs as well as wants and desires is now viewed as increasingly important in designing English language programs. All theorists (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Munby, 1978) agree on the fact that needs analysis is of primary importance in the teaching of ESP. However, in Senegal, it has been noticed that instructors working in content areas do not conduct any needs analysis, and there is usually no content-based curriculum designed to effectively train that category of learners according to their fields. One can therefore easily imagine the students' level of English after they graduate. Students notice when they become job seekers that their level of English is lower than the labor market's requirements, which explains why they are more and more willing to take private English classes after they graduate.

It is to response to such a situation that this research has been conducted. Using a qualitative approach, this research study addresses the gap that exists between the achievements of English instructional programs and the labor market's requirements in Senegal. It explores the role English plays in professional domains such as business and tourism, and assesses the English needs of the professionals working in those fields.

The main goal of this research study is to point out the need for EFL instructors working in content-specific areas to come up with content-based curricula and materials. It aims to help Senegalese EFL instructors working in content areas become more aware of the differences between EFL and ESP and their implications on ELT (English Language Teaching). Based on the results of this research, content-based materials and syllabuses that match the learners' needs can be designed in order to produce graduates that meet the job market's requirements.

2. Literature Review

The concept of ESP is so broad that there has been controversy about the interpretation of its meaning. At the first Japan Conference on English for Specific Purposes, held at Aizu University in Fukushima in November 1997 (Orr, 1997), many definitions were given for ESP. Some simply defined it as the study of English for a specific purpose, the term "specific" in ESP highlighting very well the specificity of the purpose for learning English, whereas others described it as the teaching of English for vocational or professional purposes, for example, teaching English to those who want to use it in specific fields such as business or tourism.

In their attempt to clarify the meaning of ESP, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) gave an extended definition of ESP in terms of *absolute* and *variable* characteristics. According to them, meeting the specific needs of the learners, using the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline served, and being centered on the language (grammar, lexis, and register) skills, discourse, and genres appropriate to those activities are absolute or fundamental characteristics of ESP. As to the variable ones, they refer to the fact that ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines; may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English; is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary-level institution or in a professional work situation (it could, however, be for learners at the secondary school level); is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students; and assumes some basic knowledge of the language system, but can be used with beginners. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) were more precise, describing it as an "approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning" (p. 19). Almost all theorists agree on the fact that needs analysis is of primary importance in ESP and plays a crucial role. It is considered to be the starting point of any ESP activity. Munby's (1978) language-centered approach defines needs as the *ability to comprehend and/or produce the linguistic features of the target situation*. Needs are in fact understood in terms of *learning needs* and *target situation needs*. The learning needs represent what the learner needs to do in order to learn the language, whereas the target needs are what the learner needs to do in the target situation. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) look at those *target needs* in terms of necessities (what learners have to know to function effectively in the target situation), deficiencies (the necessities learners lack), and wants (the learners' view of what their needs are). Needs analysis is the process of establishing *the what and the how* of a course and is a major feature that distinguishes ESP from general English. Richards, quoted by Jordan in his book titled *English for Academic Purposes* (1997), describes needs analysis as "the process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of learners require a language and arranging the needs according to priorities" (p. 1).

In ESP, the aims of the course are determined by the particular needs of the learner. Such a view echoes that of Dudley-

Evans and St. John (1998) who comment: "the main concerns of ESP have always been, and remain, with needs analysis and preparing learners to communicate effectively in the tasks prescribed by their study or work situation" (p. i). They defined ESP as an approach to course design that starts with the question: *Why do these learners need to learn English?* Needs analysis allows a gathering of information about the needs of a specific group of learners and helps the teacher know what kind of English to teach to whom.

The history of the study of languages for specific purposes is a very long one, and the rise of ESP is seen as the result of two separate but related developments: one economic, the other educational. In fact, many theorists agree that there are three reasons common to the emergence of ESP: the demands of a "brave new world," a revolution in linguistics, and a focus on the learner. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), after the Second World War, English became the language for international communication. It was the language used in science, technology, and business, and its new status made people other than language teachers become interested in learning it. Then, with the revolution in the field of linguistics, linguists also began to focus on the ways in which language is used in real communication rather than just describing language features. Finally, with the development of psycholinguistics, linguists became aware that learners have different skills and learning strategies, and are motivated by different needs and interests, and decided to place them at the center of any teaching activity.

Almost all researchers agree that two stages- the period from the 1960s until the introduction of *genre analysis* by Swales (1991)- have marked the development of ESP

and led to the rise of many movements. The first stage focused on *register, rhetorical, and discourse analysis*, then progressed into skills training and needs analysis. According to the register analysis theory advocates, language use is predetermined by the situation speakers are in or by the subject matter they are talking about. In other words, there is a special language or register that matches different types of subjects or situations. Therefore, a good way to serve ESP learners' needs would be—as Strevens (1977) suggested—to provide them with the key grammatical features and lexis of their specialist area by creating corpora of texts taken from specific disciplines and analyzing them. It is said that such a theory rested on the assumption that a scientific text, for example, would be made up of certain features unique to itself that could then be identified and used as the basis for teaching materials. However, researchers rapidly found out the disadvantages of such an approach. In fact, Coffey (1984) argues that register analysis not only operated only at the sentence level and says nothing about the broader features of texts that operate at the intersentential level, but also had results showing that there was very little actual difference in *scientific* language as compared to general English. In short, "register cannot be used because there is no significant way in which the language of science differs from any other kind of language" (pp. 4–5). Nevertheless, it is good to specify that although register analysis in its purest sense was abandoned in ESP after the 1960s, its influence has reached out through the 1980s and to the present day.

Discourse or rhetorical analysis developed as a movement in ESP that came to fix the problems created by register analysis. Unlike register analysis, this approach tried to look beyond the sentence. Discourse analysis does

in fact study language use *beyond the sentence boundary*, but also analyzes *naturally occurring* language use. It has had a strong influence in ESP research, and out of it has developed the *genre analysis approach* by Swales (1991), an approach that has evolved as an important system of analysis in ESP over the last two decades. Swales' enthusiasm for genre analysis is also shared by Dudley-Evans (1987), who argued that "we need a system of analysis that shows how each type of text differs from other types" (p. 73).

Hyon (1996) explains that the genre analysis approach launched the second important stage of the development of ESP, with *genre* being primarily seen as a tool for analyzing and teaching the spoken and written language required of nonnative speakers in academic and professional settings. According to him, genre research in ESP can be broadly divided into two phases:

firstly, earlier work based on analysing the moves and steps involved in discourse— 'structural move analysis'—and, secondly, later work which has broadened the definition of genre analysis to look at how *extra-linguistic features* and more recently *intercultural aspects*, have affected both the form and sequencing of language. (p. 695)

This has led to the rise of needs analysis in ESP with *needs* being an important term to look at before starting any ESP activity. ESP is in fact not "a product but an approach to language teaching which is directed by specific and apparent reasons for learning" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 16). What lies at the heart of successful language teaching is subject matter matched to the learners' experience and interests. Indeed, as Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) defined it, ESP is as an approach to course design that starts with the question: *Why do these learners need to learn English?* According to them, the main concerns of ESP have always been, and remain, with needs analysis and preparing learners to communicate effectively in the tasks prescribed by their study or work situation.

According to Howatt and Widdowson (2004), the idea of analysis of students' needs is said to have begun with Richterich's (1971) pioneering work for the Council of Europe, through the phrase *analysis of needs*. However, with the change in views on language and communicative competence, approaches to needs analysis also changed. Needs are now understood in terms of both target situation needs and learning needs, and are referred to in terms of *means*, *deficiencies*, and *learning strategies*.

In the 1980s, the *skills approach*, another broad movement of ESP that started in the register analysis period, matured and developed to cover specific skills including speaking and listening. The aim of that approach was to concentrate on the particular language skills determined by the results of a needs analysis, instead of trying to deal with all of them at the same time. This obviously led to the development of the *learning-centred approach* in ESP thanks to Hutchinson and Waters. ESP is now known as a learner-centered approach to teaching ESL or EFL, and as the latter stated, "ESP is not a matter of teaching 'specialised varieties' of English. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), the fact that language is used for a specific purpose does not imply that it is a special form of the language, different in kind to other forms; a view that echoes that of the genre analysis movement's advocates.

To sum up, the field of ESP has been growing very fast over the past 40 years, and a lot of research has been conducted about its development. From register analysis to genre analysis passing by needs analysis and the learner-centered approach, researchers have come up with many theories that inform about the field and that ESP practitioners can

take advantage of to present students with a mix to fit their particular situation.

Some research has also been conducted in the field of ESP in Senegal, West Africa, to help ESP Practitioners design curricula that meet their learners' needs. "La didactique de la langue étrangère appliquée: approche globale" by Maweja Mbaya (1998) provides some information about what Senegalese EFL instructors working in content-specific areas should be able to do as ESP practitioners. He conducted a case study of the Department of Foreign Languages at Gaston Berger University, a department that mainly offers LSP courses (English, Spanish, German, and Arabic) for business and tourism. According to the author, students of that department should be able, when they graduate, to do specific tasks in the professional domain while using the appropriate language. Such a view echoes that of Jones and Alexander, quoted by Mbaya, who assert: "using English in business always involves using both Business skills and language skills […]. It involves both knowing how to use English and knowing how to do business" (Mbaya, 1998, p. 86). Mbaya's article aims to provide a discussion of the main tasks that are involved in the design of that course, especially as to the definition of the course content, the elaboration of the teaching methodology principles, and the determination of the means for assessing the students' knowledge and performance. He proposes collaboration between the teacher and the learner in order for the teacher to know and master the professional's needs and be able to choose adequate materials.

Abdoulaye Dione, a former professor of English at the University of Dakar, is presently conducting research on the teaching of ESP in Senegal. Dione's (n.d.) doctoral thesis, which has not been defended yet, focuses on the teaching of English in Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD), Senegal's first and largest university. Dione intends to determine the students' needs, evaluate the material used in class, and evaluate the teaching as well as the assessment methods. His goal in doing such research is to come up with an ESP curriculum that can serve as a model for EFL instructors teaching in content-specific areas.

3. Methodology

This present study uses a qualitative approach to research design. It was built on the works of Hutchinson & Waters (1987) and is a Needs Analysis conducted in Senegal, West Africa, to explore the learning needs in English of Senegalese professionals working in the fields of Business and Tourism.

The research was conducted in only one region of Senegal out of 14, namely Saint-Louis. Saint-Louis was chosen because it is an important tourist and trading center. Tourism is indeed very developed in that part of the country because Saint-Louis is one of the most characteristically French colonial destinations in West Africa along with Gorée Island. Its characteristic colonial architecture along with its regular town plan, its location on an island at the mouth of the Senegal River and the system of quays, gives the city the distinctive appearance and identity that have raised the Island to the rank of world heritage since 2000 (UNESCO *Evaluation of Cultural Properties-Addendum-* 2000). As a result, a process of gentrification has set in, with many historic buildings on the island being turned into restaurants and hotels and many business companies are now setting up in that part of the country. But what is important to point out here is that, although the research was conducted only in Saint-Louis, the professionals who completed the questionnaire graduated from different

universities and technical schools all over the country. Therefore, the results of the questionnaire are representative of the whole country.

The research participants in this study were not randomly selected. As explained earlier, they are professionals working in the fields of business (post office, *credit mutuel* and bank agents) and tourism (tourist guides, hotel and travel agency employees). I investigated the professional community of Saint-Louis and tried to locate opportunities for English practice. I visited my target population at their work places to have an idea of what their needs in English could be, and asked them questions about their use of the English language in job situations.

The tool of investigation chosen to collect the data needed for this research study was the questionnaire. It was chosen because this research was initially conducted for a Master's thesis and questionnaires allow to get information from a relatively large amount of people in a short period of time. However, despite the fact that they are easy to analyze, questionnaires can often have more problems than benefits. For example, unlike in an interview, the researcher has no means to check if the respondent really understood the question asked; and as Kaplan and Saccuzzo (2009) stated in their book titled *Psychological Testing: Principles, Applications, and Issues*, because the questions are so specific to what the researchers are asking, the information gained might be minimal. Moreover, questionnaires often give too few options to answer or ask respondents to choose only one response. Yet, all researchers agree that the main problem associated with questionnaires remains the return rate. Questionnaires produce, in fact, very low return rates, whether they are mailed or online questionnaires.

To overcome such possible limitations, I distributed more questionnaires than I actually would need, keeping in mind the return rate. The questions were also very carefully constructed and worded. I tried to ask them as clearly and directly as I could, addressing only one point at a time. Hundred (100) professionals were surveyed, 50 in each category (i.e. Business and Tourism). Both open and closed questions were asked to the professionals to learn about their use of the English language in their jobs and their real needs in English. The questionnaire had three main parts: identity of the professional, identification of the professional's needs, and the professional's wants or desires. Basing my conclusions on the data collected, I summarized their needs and made recommendations for syllabus design and material development that would meet their learning needs and those of the Senegalese students in content areas such as business or tourism.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The results of the survey are stated in the form of tables, each followed by a diagram and a short comment.

Determining the tourism professionals' needs in English

From Table 1 and Figure 1, it is noticeable that 92% of the tourism professionals use English in their jobs. Only 8% do not use it, which shows the important role English plays in the field of tourism.

Table 2 and Figure 2 show that 48% of the tourism professionals use spoken English, while 44% use both oral and written English to send or respond to mails, make and confirm reservations, etc. None of the tourism professionals use written English only, and the remaining 8% who do not use English in their jobs gave no answer. These results show that tourism professionals mainly use English for oral purposes.

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Table 1: Use of English

Answer	Number	Percentage
Yes	46	92%
No	4	8%
Total	**50**	**100%**
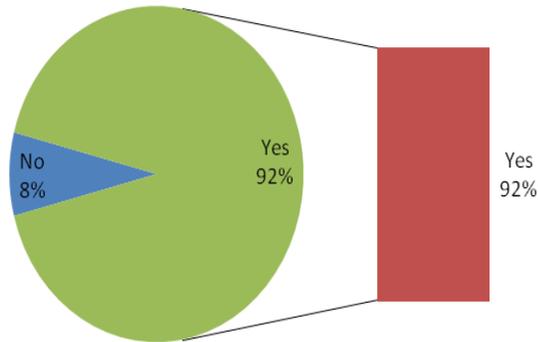
Figure 1: Use of English

Table 2: Type of English Used in Job Situation

Answer	Number	Percentage
Spoken only	24	48%
Written only	0	0%
Both written and spoken	22	44%
None of them	4	8%
Total	**50**	**100%**
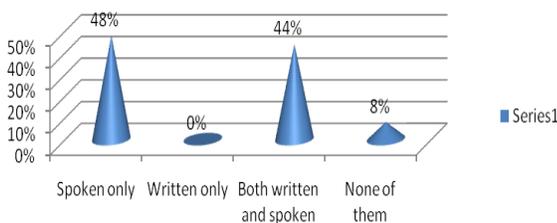
Figure 2: Type of English used in job situations.

One can notice in Table 3 and Figure 3 that 54% of the professionals encountered use English for oral purposes only-that is, to welcome, inform, guide, explain the menu to, or sell air tickets to English-speaking clients. Of the others, 36%, in addition to using English for oral purposes, need it to send or respond to correspondence via phone or e-mail. Only 2% of the tourism professionals use English to chat with their colleagues or

translate. The remaining 8% did not answer that question since they do not use English in job situations.

Table 3: Target Situations

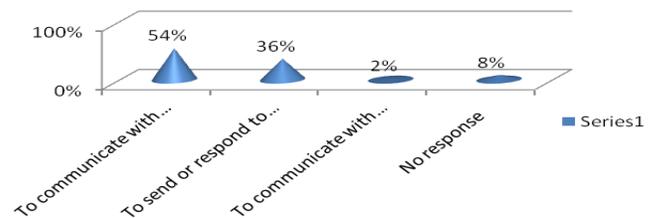| Answer	Number	Percentage
To communicate with clients	27	54%
To send or respond to correspondences	18	36%
To communicate with colleagues	1	2%
No response	4	8%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Figure 3: Target situations

From Table 4 and Figure 4, it is inferred that 98% of the tourism professionals who completed the questionnaire receive clients speaking no other language than English, which is not surprising in the field of tourism. Only 2% of those professionals did not answer that question.

Table 4: Reception of Clients Speaking no other Language than English

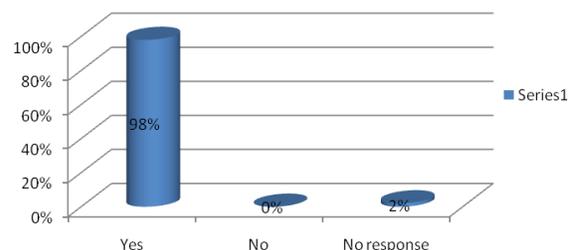| Answer	Number	Percentage
Yes	49	98%
No	0	0%
No response	1	2%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Figure 4: Reception of clients speaking no other language than English

Table 5 and Figure 5 show that 38% of the tourism professionals who took part in the survey are at ease with the English language. However, more than half (60%) face problems communicating in English with tourists.

Sixty percent of the tourism professionals face difficulties communicating in their jobs. Those difficulties are mostly comprehension issues (see Table 6 and Figure 6). The English language indeed has many dialects and is spoken with different accents depending on the geographical area its speakers come from. According to these results, some tourism professionals mostly have difficulties understanding some accents such as the American one. Indeed, the accent taught in Senegalese schools is R.P. English, which can easily explain the fact that they are more at ease with the British accent.

Table 5: Problems Communicating

Answer	Number	Percentage
Yes	30	60%
No	19	38%
No response	1	2%
Total	**50**	**100%**
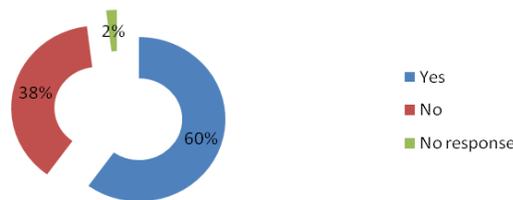
Figure 5: Problems communicating

Table 6: Problems of Communication

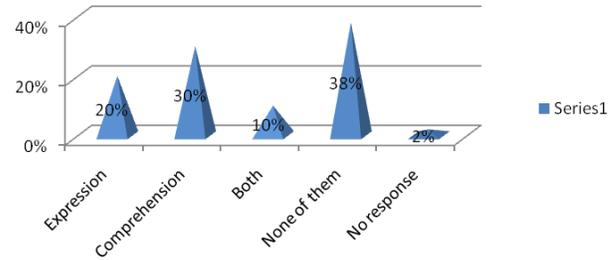| Answer	Number	Percentage
Expression	10	20%
Comprehension	15	30%
Both	5	10%
Neither	19	38%
No response	1	2%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Figure 6: Problems of communication

Table 7 and Figure 7 show that 94% of the tourism professionals want to improve their English, including those who can already communicate in job situation. Only 2 persons among the 50 declared they had mastered English enough and consequently did not need to improve their skills.

Table 7: Desire to Improve One's English

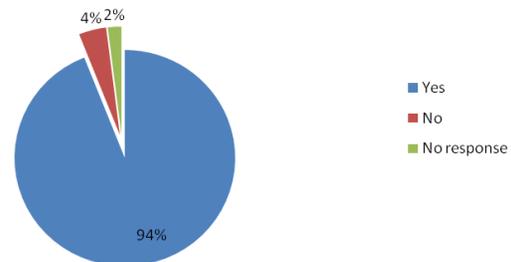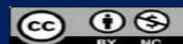| Answer	Number	Percentage
Yes	47	94%
No	2	4%
No response	1	2%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Figure 7: Desire to improve one's English

One can see in Table 8 and Figure 8 that oral skills are mostly needed by tourism professionals (72%). However, professionals pointed out that teachers should put more stress on vocabulary and listening comprehension related to the field of tourism rather than grammar.

Table 8: Aspects of English Proficiency to Improve

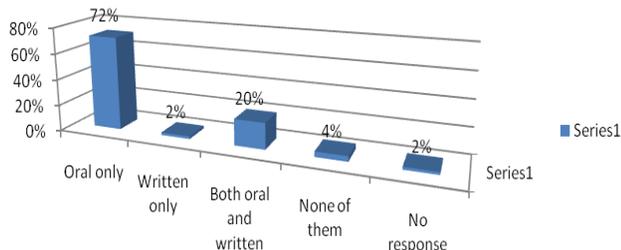| Answer	Number	Percentage
Oral only	36	72%
Written only	1	2%
Both oral and written	10	20%
None of them	2	4%
No response	1	2%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Figure 8: Aspects of English proficiency to improve

Almost all the tourism professionals are exposed to the use of English. In fact, Table 9 and Figure 9 show that although their needs might differ, all tourist guides, tourist agents, receptionists, headwaiters, and hotel managers (100%) use English in their jobs. The same observation can be made for the majority of hotelkeepers (80%), bartenders, and cashiers (66.67%). The total of 92% coincides with the percentage of the tourism professionals using English in their jobs.

Table 9: Use of English in Correlation with Job Responsibilities

Job Responsibilities	Number of People Interviewed	Number of People Using English	Percentage
Tourist Agents	4	4	100%
Tourist Guides	10	10	100%
Hotel Managers	7	7	100%
Head Waiters	2	2	100%
Receptionists	13	13	100%
Hotelkeepers	5	4	80%
Barmen	6	4	66.67%
Cashiers	3	2	66.67%
Total	**50**	**46**	**92%**
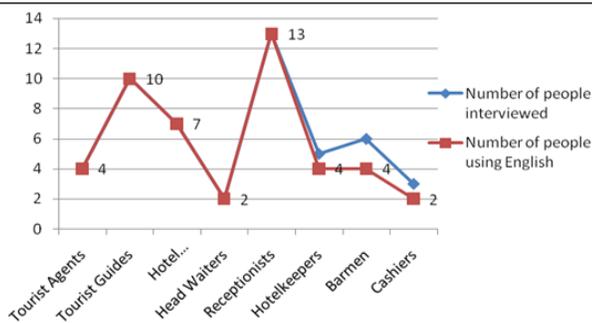
Figure 9: Use of English in correlation with job responsibilities

Determining the business professionals' needs in English

The results in Table 10 and Figure 10 show that almost all the business professionals need or use English in their jobs (86%). Only 7 out of 50 do not use English, and this is due to their job responsibilities.

Table 11 and Figure 11 show that the majority of the business professionals (62%) use oral English. In the same way, others (22%) also use, in addition to oral English, the written form to help some clients fill in customer cards, etc. Two percent (2%) of those professionals use written English only, and 14% do not use English in their jobs at all.

Table 10: Use of English

Answer	Number	Percentage
Yes	43	86%
No	7	14%
Total	**50**	**100%**
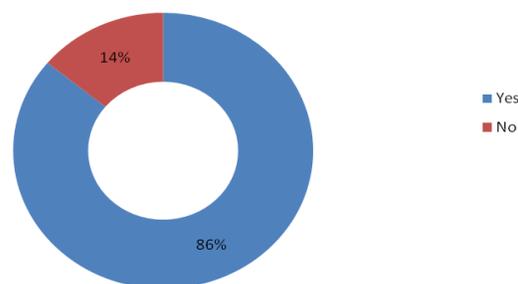
Figure 10: Use of English

Table 11: Type of English Used

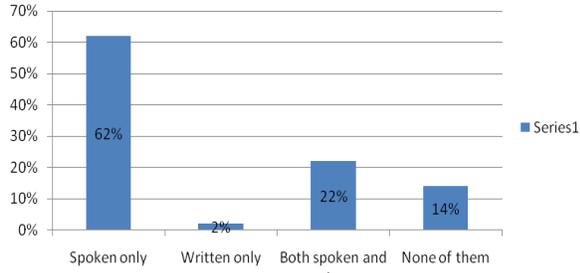| Answer	Number	Percentage
Spoken only	31	62%
Written only	1	2%
Both spoken and written	11	22%
None of them	7	14%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Figure 11: Type of English used

Table 12 and Figure 12 show that the majority (76%) express themselves in English when they receive certain clients speaking English only, mostly tourists. In addition, 10% also speak English with colleagues to chat, mostly in banks. The remaining 14% did not respond because they do not use English in their job.

Table 12: Target Situations

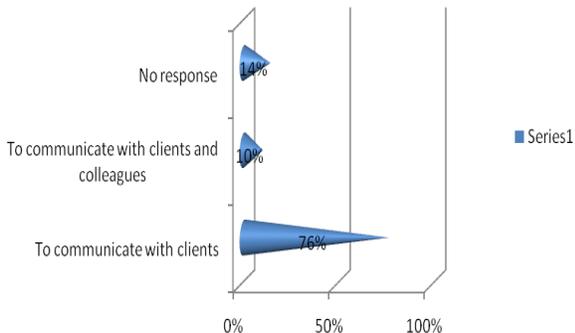| Answer	Number	Percentage
To communicate with clients	38	76%
To communicate with clients and colleagues	5	10%
No response	7	14%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Figure 12: Target situations

The results from Table 13 and Figure 13 show that 74% of the business professionals face problems communicating in English in the target situation.

Table 13: Problems Communicating

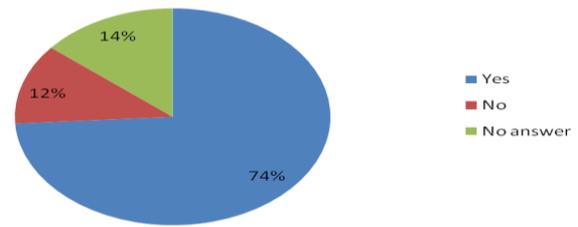| Answer	Number	Percentage
Yes	37	74%
No	6	12%
No answer	7	14%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Figure 13: Problems communicating

Among the 74% of bank or post-office workers who face difficulties communicating in their jobs, 28% have problems expressing themselves orally (see Table 14 and Figure 14). That situation is due to a lack of adequate vocabulary. Indeed, they do not find the appropriate terms needed to effectively express themselves.

Others face difficulties of getting their interlocutors in conversation, mostly when they are native speakers and particularly Americans (30%). Americans indeed have a particular accent and speak a dialect that is totally different from the one taught in Senegalese public schools.

Table 14: Problems of Communication

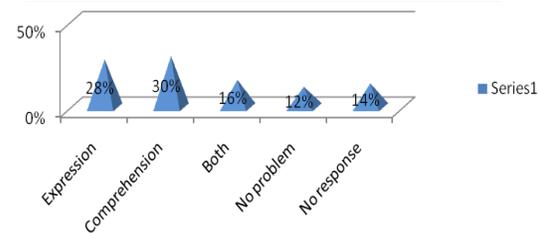| Answer	Number	Percentage
Expression	14	28%
Comprehension	15	30%
Both	8	16%
No problem	6	12%
No response	7	14%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Figure 14: Problems of communication

Sixteen percent have difficulties in both expression and comprehension, and only 12% assert that they can speak English fluently with clients.

Apart from two persons who asserted they were very skillful in English, all the professionals who were asked stated that they

wanted to improve their English (see Table 15 and Figure 15).

Table 15: Desire to Improve One's English

| Answer	Number	Percentage
Yes	44	88%
No	2	4%
No response	4	8%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Figure 15: Desire to improve one's English

As noticed with the tourism professionals, business professionals mostly need two oral skills (64%): some want to improve their pronunciation, whereas others want to enrich their vocabulary (see Table 16 and Figure 16).

Table 16: Aspects of English Proficiency to Improve

| Answer	Number	Percentage
Oral only	32	64%
Written only	0	0%
Both oral and written	12	24%
None of them	2	4%
No response	4	8%
Total	**50**	**100%**
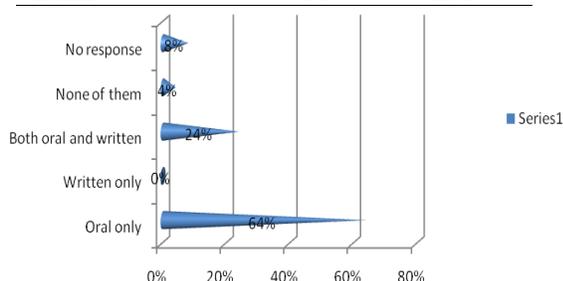
Figure 16: Aspects of English proficiency to improve

According to the results in Table 17 and Figure 17, English is a must in bank agencies. Local banks indeed work in collaboration with certain enterprises and other foreign or parent banks located in English-speaking countries. Therefore, mastering the language

for international communication can facilitate negotiations. The same situation appears in post offices where the employees who answered the questions (mostly young people) explained that they need English for partnerships with certain foreign enterprises or institutions. According to them, a salary bonus is even awarded to agents who master English. Another reason professionals pointed out as why they need to master the English language is that the majority of books or articles that deal with banking and finance are written in English. Therefore, students or young graduates and professionals need English to access that knowledge.

Table 17: Use of English in Correlation with the Profession

Profession	Number of People Interviewed	Exposure to the Use of English	Percentage
Insurance company's ag.	3	2	66%
Credit mutuel agents	9	5	55%
Bank employees	26	26	100%
Post office agents	12	10	75%
Total	**50**	**43**	**86%**
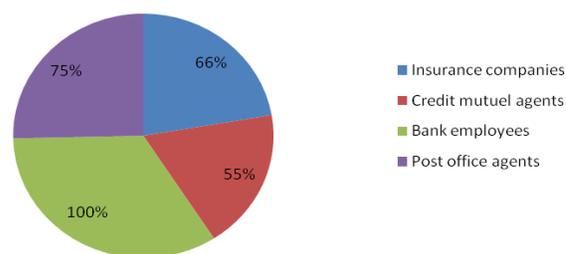
Figure 17: Use of English in correlation with the profession

However, English is not often used in *credit mutuel* agencies, and the reason given is that they mostly work with illiterate people. They even use Wolof, a national language, in their jobs more than French or any other languages.

The results of the survey show that despite its unofficial status, English plays an important role in the professional sector in Senegal, especially in the fields of business

and tourism. Ninety two per cent (92%) of the professionals in the field of tourism who answered the questions need and use English in their jobs. Since they are in constant contact with tourists, the type of English they mostly need is spoken English, but this does not mean that they do not use written English. Some of them, depending on their job responsibilities, use both oral and written English. However, although some of them claimed to speak English fluently, more than half (60%) reported facing difficulties expressing themselves correctly or understanding certain native speaker interlocutors, and 98% want to improve their oral skills in English.

In the field of business, 86% of the professionals working in banks, *credit mutuel* agencies, insurance companies, and post offices need and use English in their jobs. They receive English-speaking customers and need English for both written and oral communication. Only a few of them do not face difficulties in their use of the English language (12%), the majority having problems with expression (28%) or comprehension (30%). Therefore, 88% of those professionals want to improve their English, and 02% of those who answered that they did not use English in their jobs nevertheless want to improve their oral as well as written skills.

However, all the professionals surveyed agree that after all the years they spent learning English in high school and college, they did not acquire the skills necessary to communicate effectively in job situations. As a matter of fact, they stated a need for additional training to improve their skills in English and better use that language in the workplace. There is indeed a discrepancy between the achievements of the English instructional program in content areas and actual professional needs, and this research

study has been conducted to address that issue and help reduce the gap.

A thorough analysis of the findings of this research study reveals that the majority of Senegalese professionals working in the fields of business or tourism need training oriented towards the acquisition and practice of the English language in a 'specialized' context. Specialization of content in English teaching curricula is currently increasing, and every author agrees that English is not to be studied simply for its own sake, but rather for the communicative uses to which it can be put. English programs must be accountable to their students, meaning that teaching is based on needs assessments and that materials are developed to practice the needed language skills (Peterson & Zjednoczone, 1986, Preface). ESP learners' competence is actually measured by how effectively they are able to use the English language in job situations, and that is what this study tried to address by assessing the Senegalese professionals' needs in English in order to help produce graduates that are able to communicate effectively in their jobs.

All theorists agree that a good needs analysis is the starting point for any ESP activity and provides a strong justification for all the decisions made by ESP practitioners when designing their syllabus and materials. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), in order to get an accurate picture of the learners' actual needs, a needs analysis should be conducted. They suggested that as many informants as possible be included in the Needs Analysis, among them the future potential employers and the learners (or current employees). Learners are indeed often considered to be "the most readily available sources of specialist knowledge in any ESP classroom" (Belcher, 2009, p. 13). Unless they are first-year students, those learners are usually expected to have knowledge in the subject matter but need a

good command of the language for their jobs. Therefore, the professionals surveyed in this study are valuable sources of specialist knowledge for Senegalese EFL instructors working in content areas, since they are already aware of the purposes for which the English language is used in job situations. The results of this research study can then obviously help Senegalese EFL instructors in content areas design a programme for a course for each category of professionals (Business and Tourism) in order to help them develop the skills necessary for understanding and communicating in the workplace.

5. Conclusion

The main objective in dealing with this research topic was to identify the learning needs of Senegalese professionals working in the fields of Business and Tourism. After a thorough analysis of the data collected through surveys, recommendations to design lesson plans and adequate materials for specific-purpose learners were made in order to help reduce the gap that currently exists between the graduates' level in English and the labor market's requirements.

However, although the main purpose of this research study was to generate language needs and expectations for English courses, the results of the survey have made me wonder why those professionals, after many years taking English classes, did not acquire the skills necessary to use the language effectively in their jobs, and question their instructors' efficiency. EFL instructors working in content-specific areas are in fact supposed to teach a type of English different from general English-that is, ESP-but are they aware of the difference between general English and ESP? If yes, how do they apply it in their teaching to meet the learners' expectations? To answer those questions, further research could be conducted to investigate Senegalese EFL instructors working in content-specific areas' familiarity with ESP.

This research study clearly contributes to ELT and ELL in the field of ESP in Senegal. However, a qualitative research approach has its limitations. As commonly agreed, the most frequent criticism leveled against qualitative research is that the results obtained are not generalizable to other contexts. This research study is no exception to that and is not transferable to contexts other than the Senegalese one.

About the Author:

Dr. Amina Gaye holds a BA and an MA in English from Gaston Berger University, Saint-Louis, Senegal. Fulbright JSD Alumna, she recently completed her Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics at the University of Memphis where she worked as a Graduate Teaching Assistant in the English Department. Recently she has joined Fatima College of Health Sciences Abu Dhabi, UAE as a faculty member. Her Research interests include Second Language Acquisition, ESP, Curriculum Design in ESP and Teacher Training.

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Appendix:

QUESTIONNAIRE POUR LES BANQUIERS, LES AGENTS DE POSTE, LES PROFESSIONNELS DU TOURISME ET DES AFFAIRES

IDENTITE :

Nom :

Prénom :

Age : ☐ 20 à 30ans ☐ 31 à 40 ☐ 40 à 50 ☐ Plus de 50ans

Profession :

Lieu de travail :

Contact :

Langue (s) de travail :

BESOINS EN LANGUE ANGLAISE :

1. Décrivez-nous en quelques mots s'il vous plaît les rôles et responsabilités de votre travail.

2. Utilisez-vous l'anglais dans le cadre de votre travail ?
   ☐ OUI   ☐ NON

3. Si oui, quel type d'anglais utilisez-vous ?
   ☐ Parlé   ☐ écrit   ☐ les deux

4. Si oui, avec qui utilisez-vous le plus souvent l'anglais?
   ☐ Les clients   ☐ les touristes   ☐ Autres (précisez)

5. Vous arrive-t-il de recevoir des clients ne parlant aucune autre langue que l'anglais ?
   ☐ OUI   ☐ NON

6. Avez-vous des problèmes pour communiquer avec eux ?
   ☐ OUI   ☐ NON

7. Quels sont les problèmes auxquels vous êtes le plus souvent confronté (e) dans votre usage de la langue anglaise ?
   ☐ Expression   ☐ Compréhension   ☐ les deux   ☐ Autre (précisez)

8. Auriez-vous aimé améliorer votre anglais ?
   ☐ OUI   ☐ NON

9. Si oui, sur quels aspects voudriez-vous que votre professeur insiste ?
   ☐ Grammaire   ☐ Vocabulaire   ☐ Prononciation   ☐ Autre (précisez)