

STUDENTS' SPECIFIC NEEDS OF ENGLISH AT AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

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Résumé : Au regard de son importance à la fois dans la communication et dans les affaires, l'enseignement-apprentissage de l'anglais est de nos jours orienté et basé sur des objectifs spécifiques. Être capable de parler l'anglais de son domaine est une compétence de plus en plus exigée dans le monde de la science. La présente étude vise à analyser les besoins en langue anglaise des étudiants des facultés d'agronomie. A cet effet, cinquante (50) étudiants de troisième année de licence choisis au hasard dans cinq spécialités du domaine agronomique au sein de l'Université de Parakou (Bénin) ont constitué l'échantillon de l'étude. Au moyen des questionnaires, des discussions de groupe et l'analyse des contenus, des données relatives aux motivations, aux difficultés et aux besoins linguistiques spécifiques des étudiants ont été collectées. Le traitement des données avec le logiciel SPSS a consisté en des approches à la fois qualitatives et quantitatives. Les résultats ont révélé que tous les étudiants étaient conscients de l'importance de la langue anglaise dans leur future carrière et ont montré un intérêt majeur à son égard. Aussi, ont-ils besoin à la fois de connaissances générales en anglais agricole et même celles spécifiques en lien avec à leurs sous-domaines agronomiques. Cependant, il a été révélé que les étudiants manquent toujours de vocabulaires spécifiques de l'agriculture. L'analyse du contenu des cours montre qu'ils ne sont pas bien adaptés aux besoins spécifiques des étudiants ainsi que la stratégie d'enseignement des enseignants. De plus, les étudiants rencontrent d'importantes difficultés en compréhension de l'écrit, de la communication orale, en compréhension de l'écoute et en rédaction académique. Ces constats appellent à redéfinir un nouveau curriculum susceptible de mieux répondre aux besoins réels des étudiants en sciences agronomiques.

Mots clés : Analyse des besoins, Faculté d'Agronomie, étudiants, Anglais spécifique.

ANALYSE DES BESOINS EN ANGLAIS SPECIFIQUES AU PROFIT DES APPRENANTS DE LA FACULTE D'AGRONOMIE

Abstract : Due to its importance both in communication and business, English language teaching-learning has been shifting from general purpose to specific one. Being able to speak his field's English is a better skill asked by more institutions. The present research aimed to analyze students' English needs at Agronomy College. To that purpose, fifty (50) third year undergraduate students randomly selected from five specialties in the Faculty of Agronomy school of University of Parakou (Benin) have constituted the sample of the study. Through questionnaires, Focus Group Discussion and content analysis procedures, data related to students' motivations, difficulties and specific language needs have been collected. The data processing with SPSS software has consisted in both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The findings revealed that all the students are aware of English language importance in their future career and showed strong interest toward it. Students need both general knowledge to agronomy and specific English to their specialties. However, the students lack agricultural specific vocabulary. Courses' content analysis do not fit well with students' needs as well as the teaching strategy. Also students meet great difficulty in reading, writing, speaking, listening and spelling. These observations call for a redefinition of a new curricula that could better satisfy students' real English need.

Keywords: Needs analysis, Agronomy College, students, ESP.

Introduction

Due to its importance both in communication and business, English language teaching-learning has been shifting from general purposes to specific ones. Being able to speak his field's English is a great asset required by more institutions. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) refers to learning English for specific need. Such English teaching takes into account learners' needs and the future use of the language in professional life. Indeed, the most important learner's objective for learning English is to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform specific job-related functions (Nur Fitria, 2020). According to Hans and Hans (2015), ESP concentrates more on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures. It covers various subjects such as accounting, computer science, tourism, business management, agriculture, agronomic science, etc. An important feature of ESP is the connection of the teaching to students' real life. Thus, it is a learner-centered English that caters students' needs.

In the agricultural sector, mastering specific English helps students undergo advanced studies, to get international scholarships and to have a successful professional career. For researchers, lecturers and PhD students, it enables them to better design proposals, articles and to attend international workshops and

colloquium. Furthermore, almost all the agricultural inputs like fertilizers, chemical products, imported seeds and machines' labels and guidelines are designed in English with, sometimes no French version. To get the cautionary information inside them and to use these materials accordingly, one must have good level in English. However, after years of English studying at farming college, it is often observed that most learners are not able to use an appropriate language related to their domain. They are obliged to take additional language training and encounter lot of difficulties after study. Consequently, they are disgraced for many international opportunities because of lack of specific English skills. So, there is need of English analysis that determines which language skills are relevant in agricultural College, so as to design English syllabus appropriately for that purpose. The present research work aims at investigating the specific English language needed by students at farming college of University of Parakou.

1. Objectives of the study

The present research work is conducted to:

- ✓ Assess agronomy students' motivation toward English langue ;
- ✓ Identify students' real English needs to be implemented in Agronomy College.
- ✓ Analyse agronomy students' difficulties in ESP classes ;

1.1. Research questions and hypotheses

In prior to this research work, a certain number of research questions related to the situation of English language learning in the field of agronomy are established. And then, in the same streamline the appropriate hypotheses in linkage to the research questions are rephrased for the purpose of validation or not so as to indicate a research process.

1.1.1. Research questions

To achieve the goals assigned to the study, the following questions have been asked such as:

- ✓ **Question 1:** *Are agricultural college students interested in English classes?*
- ✓ **Question 2:** *What are the students' real English needs?*
- ✓ **Question 3:** *What difficulties farming college learners are confronted with in learning ESP?*
- ✓ **Question 4:** *Do English courses contents fit with student's specific domains' needs?*

1.1.2. Research hypotheses

Attempts to answer the above research questions have led to the research hypotheses as below.

- ✓ **Hypothesis 1:** *All the Agricultural College students dislike the English language due to curricula not matching with their needs.*
- ✓ **Hypothesis 2:** *Students need specific English skills related to their domains of specialization.*
- ✓ **Hypothesis 3:** *Learners are confronted with many problems in ESP learning such as lack of basic English knowledge, the short duration of ESP classes, the lack of adequate learning materials and inadequate teaching strategy.*
- ✓ **Hypothesis 4:** *The English courses given to agricultural students do not match with their speciality's requirements.*

2. Significance of the study

ESP differs deeply from English as Foreign Language (EFL) or English as Second Language (ESL) in the case that the first one looks for a precise goal while the others stand for general goal. The most important difference lies in the learners and their purposes for learning English. In fact, ESP learners are usually considered as adult EFL students just because they already have some acquisition background in EFL. They also have potentials to communicate in a set of professional environment where they perform particular activities. An ESP program is therefore built on an assessment of purposes and needs and the functions for which English is required. ESP concentrates more on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures or for global use of it. It covers subjects varying from accounting or computer science to tourism and business management. The ESP focal point is that English is not taught as a subject separated from the students' real world (or wishes). It is rather integrated into a subject matter area important to the learners. In fact, generally, as we consider that in the process of learning EFL/ESL, most language instructors stress on the traditional four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) with the same importance. However, when deciding to perform ESP classes, the needs analysis are the determinants to build the syllabus, programs and lessons design in correlation to the domain of a given learner. An ESP program might, for example, emphasize the development of reading skills in students who are preparing for graduate work in business administration. It might also promote the development of spoken skills in students who are studying English in order to become tourist guides. For many years, it has been observed that after years of study in agronomic sciences, students are no more able to converse and convey a message in their specific domain of profession or

study nor able to use it in their professional life. Moreover, some students do not attend English classes because they consider it as a useless language.

However, successful ESP teaching combines subject matter and English language teaching. Such a combination is highly motivating because it makes students apply what they learn in their English classes to their main field of study.

3. Problem statement

Today's world is the ones of globalization in which people and communities are interconnected through a common language. In such connection, English language plays a tremendous role. Indeed, such language is known for its universal characteristic and mostly used in every field. It is the language of business and technology. Considered as the language of science, the most important books and articles are published in English and are therefore highly valued. Furthermore, apart from their professional qualification, people with a good mastery of English skills are demanded and privileged by employers. In some companies, in-site trainings are organized for employees to build their capacity in English. Consequently, ESP teaching has become the top priority of vocational school. In Benin, as never before, English has gained in importance. Both public and private school have set English matter in their curricula. In vocational education, technical English is taught so as to help students acquire vocabularies and terminologies related to their field of specialization. At university level, students are asked to produce English language certificate before undertaking Master and PhD study. In agricultural study, English language is mostly used. In agribusiness, to export manufactured products to international market, one needs English. In addition, almost all the modern agricultural machines and inputs are from English speaking countries and have handling information written in English. So, it is clear that without a good knowledge of English, agricultural professionals cannot be successful in their field. However, it has frequently been observed that a lot of undergraduate students in farming colleges have very weak knowledge in English. They lack English vocabularies related to their specialty. They are consequently dismissed for international competition. This is due to the mismatch between English language skills taught and the ones relevant to their field of specialization.

4. Methodology

Based on the design of this research, an appropriate research methodology is determined by considering the objectives of the survey.

4.1. Framework of the study

The Faculty of Agronomy of the University of Parakou in Northern Benin has served as setting to the present work. Like other Beninese colleges that deliver vocational education and training programs, the Faculty of Agronomy provides students with occupational certificate that, upon graduation, allowed them to work as high-level technicians in the agricultural sector. The College trains students in five specialties such as crop and plant breeding (CSPB), animal science (AS), nutrition and food science (NFS), natural resources management (NRM) and rural economy and sociology (RES).

4.1.1. Sampling technique

In the present research work, only third year undergraduate students registered in Agronomic College for the academic year 2021-2022 represent the target population. The participants were selected through random procedure basing on their will to participate in the study. In sum, fifty (50) students were chosen from the five domains of study kept. There were 15 (30%) female participants and 35 (70%) male participants. The table 1 below shows the structure of the sample depending on the specialties.

Table 1: Distribution of participant students by domain of study

Sub-fields of study	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Natural Ressource Management (NRM)	9	18,0
Rural Economy and Sociology (RES)	13	26,0
Nutrition and Food Security Science (NFS)	10	20,0
Animal Science (AS)	7	14,0
Crop Science and Plant Breeding (CSPB)	11	22,0
Total	50	100,0

Source: Survey (2022)

4.2. Data collection

For data collection, various techniques and instruments have been employed. They include questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion, course contents analysis and placement test.

4.2.1. *Questionnaires*

The questionnaire addressed to the undergraduates contained twenty-five (25) items. It is designed in a way that students could understand and fill it easily by just ticking the options. The items help to collect the students' motivation toward English language, the language specific needs and the difficulties that they face in English class. To avoid mistakes and make its filling quick, the undergraduates were asked to use either French or English to answer some questions, and each item were translated into French orally to them.

4.2.2. *Focus Group Discussion*

This procedure aimed to collect difficulties students were faced with in ESP class and the particular way the ESP course is conducted. Focus Groups Discussion (FGD) also has helped to cross the answers and check for their trueness. A minimum of ten (07) learners per specialty have constituted each group. Five (05) domains were concerned. In total, five (05) FGDs have been done and have lasted ten (10) minutes each. Open-ended and closed-ended questions were asked to the participants on the basis of a guideline.

4.2.3. *Course' contents analysis*

This technique aimed to analyse ESP course contents and to check its relevancy to the different domains of study. In that respect, with the help of the students, the written notes, handouts and exam papers were collected. The analysis concerned the vocabularies, words and phrases used in link with the specialities.

4.2.4. *Placement test outcome analysis*

The placement test aimed to evaluate students' knowledge of specific English to their domains of study. Then, five (05) English tests were designed in accordance to the different domains of study and administrated to the students participants. Each placement test has lasted ten (10) minutes. After completing, the copies were collected and marked on stage. This technique has helped to assess their capability to understand and use the appropriate terminologies and vocabularies of their domains.

4.3. *Data processing*

For statistical analysis, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16 software had been used and had consisted into both qualitative and quantitative

approaches. The quantitative analysis has been done through descriptive statistics calculation. Then, frequency and percentage counts were calculated as well as graphs were made. Qualitative analysis has consisted mainly in content analysis.

5. Findings presenting and discussion

5.1. Findings presenting

5.1.1. Students' motivation

The results revealed that all students - specialists in third year participating to the study were aware of the importance of English language in nowadays life. Various reasons were identified to be the motives that draw their interest to learn English. The figure 1 shows the different first motivations of learning specific English.

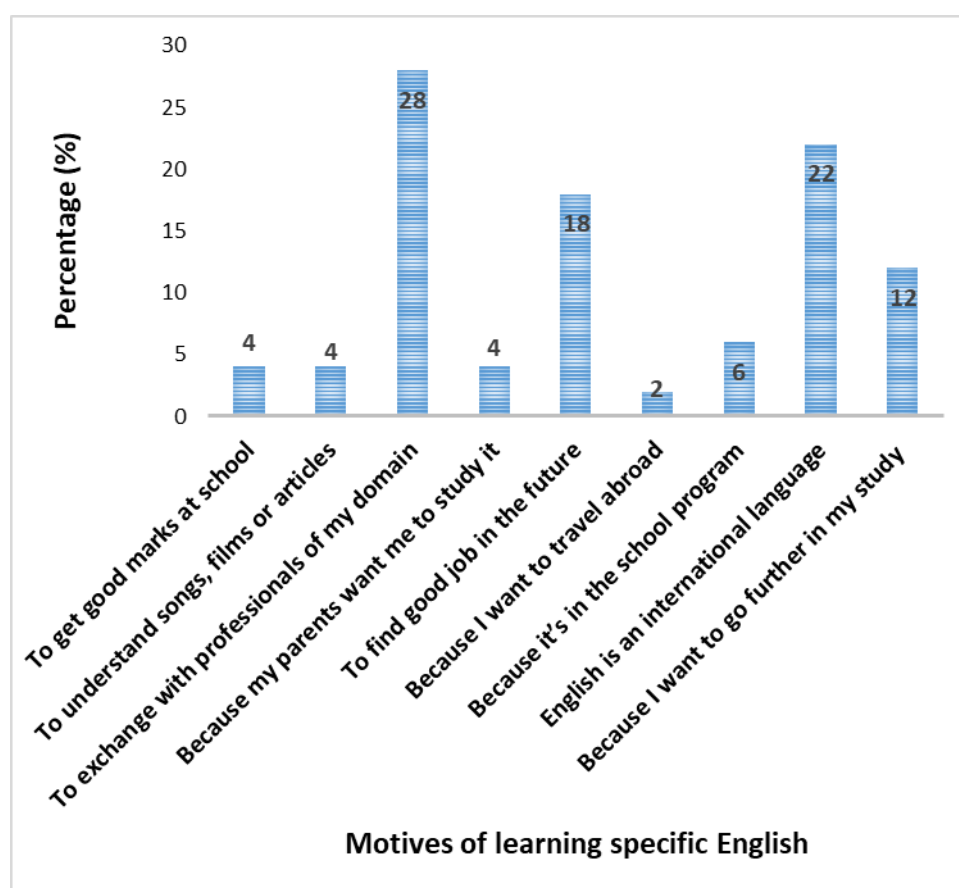


Figure 1: Source of motivation for learning specific English

Source: Survey (2022)

From the figure 1, the first reasons were increasingly (a) Because I want to travel abroad (2%), (b) to get good marks at school (4%), (c) to understand songs, films or articles (4%), (d) Because my parents want me to study it (4%), (e) Because it's in the school program (6%), (f) Because I want to go further in my study (Master and PhD)

(12%), (g) To find good job in the future (18%), (h) Because English is an international language (22%), (i) To exchange with professionals of my domain (28%). So, one can conclude that, the most important motive that determines students' interest was to be able to exchange with other professionals of their domain.

Concerning the question about studying English outside classroom, 16 students, that is 32% of the respondents answered that they learn English outside school against 34 students that is 68% who did not do.

The table 2 bellow show how long learners practice English language outside school for their own improvement.

Table 2: Time for outside class activity

Time for outside class learning	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No practice	34	68,0
1 Hour / Day	1	2,0
2 Hours / Day	3	6,0
2 Hours / Week	1	2,0
2 Months	2	4,0
30 Minutes / Day	1	2,0
3 Months	5	10,0
5 -15 Minutes / Day	1	2,0
Free time	1	2,0
Occasionally	1	2,0
Total	50	100,0

Source: Survey (2022)

The table 3 indicates that, 1 person (2%) practices English exercise 1 hour per day, 3 persons (6%) 2 hours per day, 1 person (2%) 2 hours per week, 1 person (2%) 30 minutes per day, 2 persons (4%) for 2 months, 1 person (2%) from 5 to 15 minutes per day, 1 person (2%) at their free time and 1 person (2%) occasionally. The maximum time devoted to outside school training was 3 months training done by 05 persons, that is 10%. As well, 34 persons, that is 68% dedicated no time for outside language practices.

5.1.2. Students' language needs

For the students' English needs, it has been found that 41 undergraduates that is 82% of the respondents need terminologies and vocabularies of all the agricultural domains, whereas only 9 students, that is 18% have expressed the need of specific English to their domain of specialization. Those needs are as displayed in the table 4 below.

Table 4: Students' language needs

Speciality	Natural Resources Management (NRM)	Rural Economy and Sociology (RES)	Nutrition and Food Security Science (NFS)	Animal Science (AS)	Crop and Plant Breeding Science (CPBS)
Terminologies of interest	Trees, natural resources, environment, lab, forest, plantation, fauna, flora, irrigation, etc.	Extension, Agricultural institutions, management, society, communication, planning, innovation, economy, climate change, etc.	Food, pastry, cake, bread, cheese, lab, processing, pasteurization, sterilization, bakery, etc.	Animal health, lab, infection, insemination, shed, forage, provender, breeder, shepherd, etc.	Plant, Cultivar, farming, fertilizer, soil depletion, disease, plant protection, pest, etc.

Source: Survey, (2022)

Furthermore, 90% of the students, that is 45 respondents have chosen scientific writing and said that they are very interested in it.

5.1.3. Students' difficulties in ESP class

The study has revealed that agricultural college's students were faced with many difficulties in learning English for Specific Purpose. Dealing with the language's skills, the undergraduates encounter difficulties in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, Spelling, vocabulary and grammar. The charts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 below show the students' difficulties in English class.

Difficulty in reading

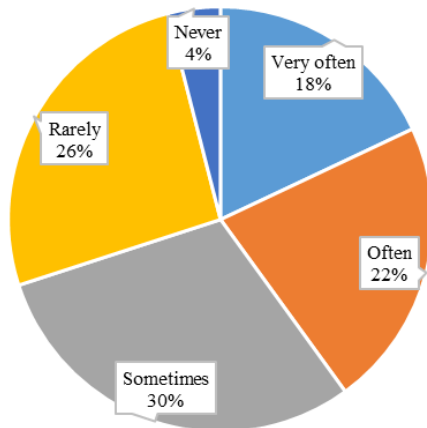


Figure 1: Students' difficulty in reading writing skill

Source: Survey, (2022)

Difficulty in writing

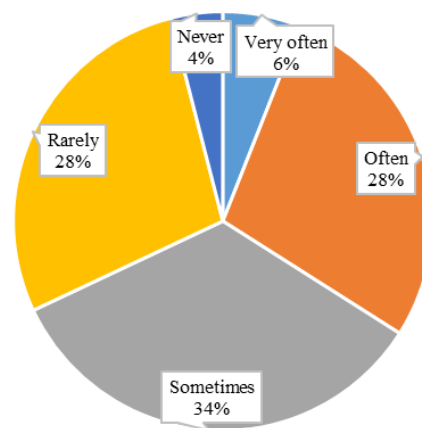


Figure 2: Students' aptitude in

Source: Survey, (2022)

The figure 2 reveals that 18% of the informants have very often problem ~~in~~ with in reading, 22% often and 30% sometimes. Also 26% rarely meet difficulties and 4% never met such difficulties.

As observed in figure 2, the chart 3 displays that only 4% of the informants have no problem of writing skill whereas 34% have problem sometimes, 28% rarely, 28% often and 6% frequently.

Difficulty in speaking

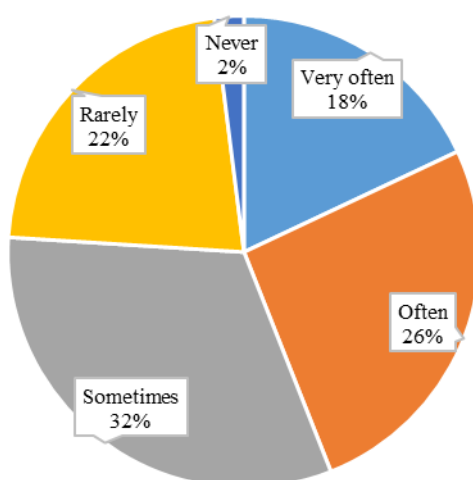


Figure 4: Students' aptitude in speaking listening

Source: Survey, (2022)

Difficulty in listening

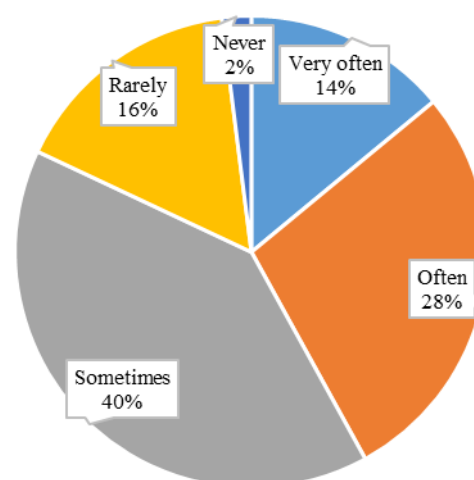


Figure 5: Students' aptitude in

Source: Survey, (2022)

Concerning speaking skill difficulty, 2% of the participants meet no matter, 32% meet it sometimes, 26% often, 22% rarely and 18% very often.

In the chart 5, few persons, that is 2% never meet difficulty in listening, 14% met very often, 16% met rarely, 28% often. The majority of them, that is 40% meet this issue sometimes.

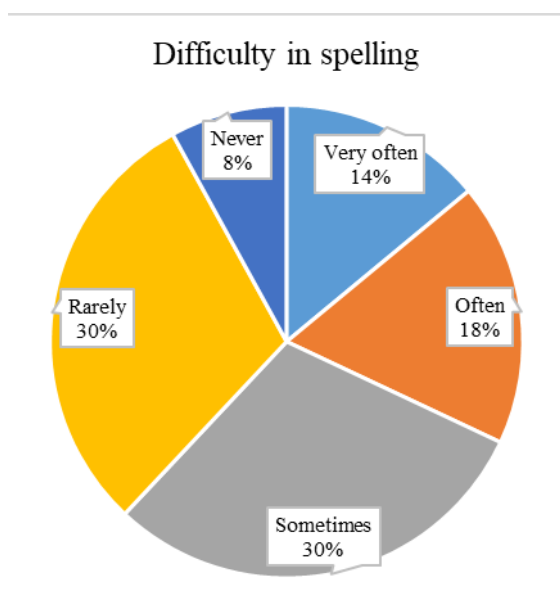


Figure 6: Students' difficulty in spelling vocabulary

Source: Survey, (2022)

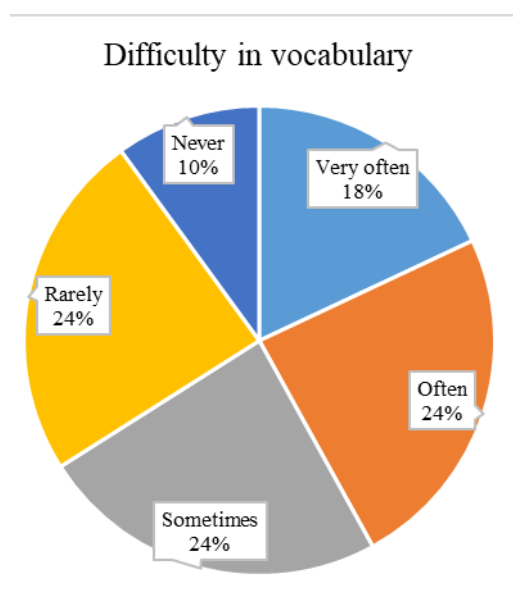


Figure 7: Students' difficulty in

Source: Survey, (2022)

In spelling, the majority of the informants, that is 30% said they rarely have incapacity to spell words (Figure 6). The same percentage for those who said they sometimes meet such difficulty. Same, 18% feel difficulty often and 14% have it very often. Only 8% have never difficulty in spelling a specific word.

The figure 7, most students, it is 24% have either rarely, sometimes, or often issue in learning new vocabularies of their domains of study. Though, 18% felt difficulty very often and 10% never.

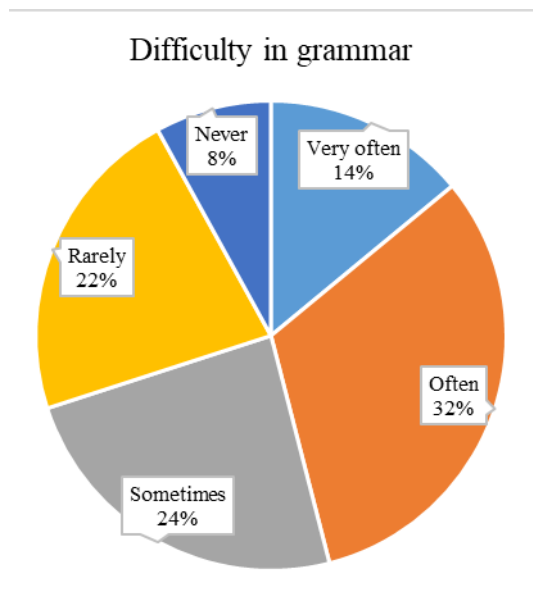


Figure 8: Students' difficulties in grammar

Source: Survey, (2022)

The figure 8 shows that in learning English grammar, 8% of the learners have never met difficulties. About 14% meet very often difficulty, 32% often, 24% for sometimes and 22% rarely.

Moreover, the study has pointed out many other constraints such as lack of adequate materials, short English class time and inadequacy of teaching method used by lecturers. The students stated that English lecturers use high speed English during class so that they cannot understand the course.

The courses' content analysis done has revealed that although they were field-oriented, they did not contain enough specific words and vocabularies that can enable students to develop their fields' specific English. Indeed, the placement test outcome analysis has proved that they lack consistent vocabulary in their domain. Findings confirmed that 86% of the respondents had an average between 0 and 9 off 20; 6% between 10 and 12 off 20 and 8% between 13 and 19 as averages.

5.2. Discussion

Findings from figure 1 have shown that different motives draw Agronomy Bachelor 3 students' interest to English language and strengthened their decision to learn it. The graph demonstrated that the most important reasons were increasingly (a) Because I want to travel abroad (2%), (b) to get good marks at school (4%), (c) to understand songs, films or articles (4%), (d) Because my parents want me to study it (4%), (e) Because it's in the school program (6%), (f) Because I want to further my study

(Master and PhD) (12%), (g) To find good job in the future (18%), (h) Because English is an international language (22%), (i) To exchange with professionals of my domain (28%). In evidence, the most important motive for students was to exchange with professionals of their domain. These figures proved that learners were conscious enough of English language place in their future professional career. In fact without a good knowledge in specific English, a professional cannot be internationally known. According to John, Gurario and Halepota (2021), most corporate firms nowadays recruit personnel who are fluent in English and have outstanding communication skills since these talents will be extremely beneficial to the organization's future success. Because they feel that professionals with strong communication skills can effectively represent their firms at international conferences, seminars, workshops, and other business gatherings. The observations are similar to works by Sarudin and al. (2013) who claim that communication skills in English, particularly in English speaking organizations and settings, are indispensable workplace tools for success in business. To them, fast ability to respond to professionals in English is correlated with career success and lead to financial rewards to employees. Concerning the outside classroom activity, 16 students, that is 32% of the respondents answered that they learn English outside school against 34 students that is 68% do not do it. The study found out that 2% practice English exercise for 1 hour per day, 6% for 2 hours per day, 2% for 2 hours per week, 2% for 30 minutes per day, 4% had 2 months training, 2% from 5 to 15 minutes per day, 1 person (2%) at their free time and 01 person (2%) occasionally. The maximum time was 3 months training done by only 05 persons, that is 10%. These observations have showed how less important the English subject counts in students' learning schedule. The results corroborate those by Saha (2017). To his works, one of the causes that lead to the Bangladeshi learners' absence of motivation toward writing skill is rooted in the corresponding education system at work.

As for with students' specific English needs, it has been found that 41 undergraduates that is 82% of the respondents have expressed the terminologies and vocabularies from all the domains of agricultural study whereas only 9 student, that is 18% were in need of specific English related to their field of study. These remarks have sort out the students' lack of basic English knowledge to agriculture. This observation justifies the necessity to bachelor 1 and bachelor 2 English teachers to be as complete as possible so as to cover the general notions of all the agricultural sub-domains. Also, more time should be given to ESP lecturers to teach both general and specific English. Furthermore, 90%, have chosen scientific writing and said that they are very interested. This is very important since (12%) of the informants aim to further their study to Master and PhD and then, have set it to be the third objective for learning English.

The findings also show that the skills in which students very often have difficulties are decreasingly speaking (18%), reading (18%), vocabulary (18%), listening (14%), grammar (14%), spelling (14%) and writing (6%). Therefore, one can categorize these skills into three groups basing on how much difficulty students feel at them. There are the most difficult skills that are *speaking, reading and vocabulary*, the medium difficult composed of *listening, grammar and spelling* and the less difficult one which is *writing*. Indeed, the first two groups are oral communication skills which are found to be challenging to learners most of the time. Then, some students may have good writing skill, but are no more able either to speak, to read or to listen. The results corroborate the ones by Walker (2014) who found that listening is an important skill which teaching deserves strategies.

In the same vein, all the students have pinpointed the short duration devoted to English class and the lack of modern materials like TV and audios as well. This remarks confirmed the ones by Omidian, Akbary and Shahriari (2019) who found that students who spend more time reading and watching movies/TV have a better knowledge of English phrasal verbs. Moreover, the maximum of learners disagreed the teaching method used by teachers. According to them, there is no handout sometimes and teachers sometime discuss topics that are not relevant to their field. These findings have confirmed the one from course content analysis that revealed the mismatch between course's contents and the specialty. This remark has raised the problem of lesson planning and course designing which are two steps tremendous for class achievement. Similar researches have been done by Rasyimah, Ahyar and Sari (2018) who observed that in designing ESP course for first year students of Engineering Faculty at Malikussaleh University, lecturers face lot of challenges because each step bears its own challenges. They conclude in the study that to design an ESP course involves five crucial stages, that are, needs analysis, syllabus, material, teaching, and evaluation. Richards, (2001) stresses more and state that in the context of ESP, course design is a process of data collection in preparing effective tasks, activities, and creating the collecting data to prepare effective tasks, activities, and to create the most suitable setting for ESP learners to achieve their goals.

For the evaluation method, they wish the exam would be more oral so that they develop their speaking skill. In addition they expressed the need to have regular immersion visit in English countries. Nevertheless, scientific writing was found to be important to students because, to some of them they have the will to further their study.

Besides, the placement test has shown that students have very weak level in terms of specialty English knowledge. The mean average was 5.04 off 20. Only three persons got between 15 and 19 off 20.

Conclusion

The present study has highlighted third year agronomic college students' English needs. The findings have shown that the undergraduates need both specific English for their fields of specialization and basic agronomic English. Furthermore, the study has pointed out that students are faced with many difficulties related to reading, writing, speaking, listening, spelling, specific vocabularies and grammar. The work has shown that they also complained about the short duration of English class, lack of modern materials and the mismatch of ESP course's content and their fields 'expectations. Nevertheless, the undergraduates students show strong motivation toward English language and would like to better themselves at it so as to be able to converse with other professionals at international level. This study suggest the Agronomy ESP teachers to better design their courses by taking into account students real needs so as to make them more proficient at work after graduation.

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