Scientific Research Publishing

Open Journal of Social Sciences, 2026, 14(3), 403-424
https://www.scirp.org/journal/jss
ISSN Online: 2327-5960
ISSN Print: 2327-5952

From Didactic Triangle to Pedagogical Pyramid in ESP: Responding to Labor-Market Needs

Afef Raddaoui

Higher Institute of Technological Studies, Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia
Email: afef.raddaoui@gmail.com

How to cite this paper: Raddaoui, A. (2026). From Didactic Triangle to Pedagogical Pyramid in ESP: Responding to Labor-Market Needs. *Open Journal of Social Sciences, 14,* 403-424.
https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2026.143023

Received: February 9, 2026
Accepted: March 16, 2026
Published: March 19, 2026

Abstract

The global labor market is rapidly evolving under the influence of technological innovation and globalization, prompting significant changes in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) pedagogy. Traditionally conceptualized through the didactic triangle of teacher, learner, and content, ESP now requires a closer alignment with industry needs. This paper advocates a reconceptualization of this model into a dynamic pyramid, positioning industry at the apex as the primary driver of employability skills. While the teacher, learner, and content remain essential components, their roles must be redefined through systematic needs analysis and adaptive course design. Drawing on a review of relevant literature and data from an online survey of Tunisian ESP practitioners, the study underscores the importance of continuous professional development to help teachers incorporate industry input and design market-responsive curricula. The findings highlight a shift toward teachers as facilitators and learners as active participants, with a strong emphasis on aligning ESP instruction with employer expectations to prepare graduates with relevant, future-oriented competencies.

Keywords

English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Didactic Triangle, Teacher, Learner, Content, Industry-Driven Curriculum, Employability, Needs Analysis, Course Design, Teacher Training

1. Introduction

The evolving global job market, shaped by technological advancement and globalization, has prompted a necessary transformation in the teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Basturkmen, 2010; Belcher, 2009; Swales, 2000; Robinson, 1991). Shifts in employment patterns now prioritize flexibility, remote col-

laboration, and new skill-sets (eSoft Skills, 2023; IZA World of Labor, 2022). Traditionally framed as a didactic triangle of teacher, learner, and content, ESP must now realign its pedagogical model to meet the competencies demanded by modern industries. As a branch of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), ESP emphasizes tailoring instruction to learners' academic and professional needs (Basturkmen, 2010). This paper proposes transitioning from the static triangle to a dynamic pyramid model, placing industry at the apex as the principal driver of employability. Such alignment reflects the global trend toward industry-informed education, where curricula are shaped by real-world demands (Evans & Green, 2007; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). While teacher, content, and learner remain foundational at the pyramid's base, they must evolve through systematic needs analysis and adaptive course design—both critical to ensuring ESP instruction meets occupational relevance (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Basturkmen, 2010).

In light of these considerations, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1) What challenges do ESP practitioners and learners face within the traditional didactic triangle model in the Tunisian higher education context?

2) To what extent do current ESP practices address employability skills and labor-market needs?

3) How do ESP practitioners perceive the role of industry engagement in enhancing course design, content relevance, and learner preparedness?

4) How can an industry-driven pedagogical pyramid be operationalized to support a market-responsive ESP curriculum?

2. Challenges Faced by ESP Practitioners in Relation to the Didactic Triangle

2.1. Inadequate Training and Professional Development

A central challenge for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) practitioners—both globally and in Tunisia—is the lack of specialized training aligned with industry-specific needs. Teachers are often expected to deliver ESP instruction without sufficient knowledge of learners' professional domains, resulting in content that may not fully meet student or industry expectations (Basturkmen, 2010; Bougues, 2018; Daoud, 1998). In Tunisia, this issue is particularly pronounced due to the absence of formal programs integrating language pedagogy with domain expertise. Consequently, many practitioners rely on general English teaching backgrounds, with limited familiarity in fields such as engineering, healthcare, or business (Ben Abdallah & Bouzidi, 2018; Labassi, 2010). This gap compromises instructional effectiveness and underscores the persistent disconnect between educational institutions and industry in teacher preparation (Daoud, 1998; Labassi, 2010).

2.2. Limited Industry Collaboration

ESP practitioners in Tunisia also face minimal collaboration with industry stakeholders. Without direct input from professionals, educators often lack access to

up-to-date information on language use and skills required by employers. Despite efforts to modernize the educational system, coordination between ESP programs and local industries remains limited (Ben Abdallah & Bouzidi, 2018; Daoud, 1998). This disconnect results in curricula that inadequately reflect current industry practices, particularly in technology, healthcare, and business sectors, and hampers the ability of teachers to deliver relevant, field-specific instruction (Daoud, 1998; Labassi, 2010).

2.3. Pressure to Teach General English

In many cases, ESP practitioners are compelled to teach general English instead of industry-specific language, due to institutional curriculum requirements or limited understanding of ESP's importance. In Tunisian public universities, general language proficiency is often prioritized over specialized instruction (Farah & Ayed, 2017; Daoud, 1998). The scarcity of programs targeting sectors such as engineering, healthcare, or tourism results in generic curricula that fail to meet learners' professional needs (Ben Abdallah & Bouzidi, 2018; Daoud, 1998). This situation restricts the potential impact of ESP instruction on employability, as practitioners struggle to shift from general to industry-focused teaching (Farah & Ayed, 2017; Daoud, 1998).

3. Challenges Faced by Learners in Relation to the Didactic Triangle

3.1. Lack of Relevance to Real-World Needs

ESP learners in Tunisia frequently encounter courses that are not directly relevant to their future professions. Generic language instruction often overlooks specialized skills required in engineering, business, or medical fields, leading to disengagement and diminished motivation (Farah & Ayed, 2017; Ayadi, 2011; Daoud, 1998; Ben Abdallah & Bouzidi, 2018). This misalignment between curriculum and workplace demands limits learners' ability to develop competencies essential for professional success.

3.2. Limited Opportunities for Active Learning

Traditional ESP pedagogy in Tunisia is predominantly lecture-based and teacher-centered, offering few interactive or experiential learning opportunities. Methods such as role-playing, case studies, or project-based activities—critical for applying language skills in real-world contexts—are underutilized (Knapp & Seidlhofer, 2009; Suherman, 2021). The lack of active engagement exacerbates the disconnect between classroom learning and professional demands, limiting students' practical language development.

3.3. Diverse Language Proficiency Levels

ESP classrooms in Tunisia often comprise students with widely varying proficiency levels, from strong English foundations to basic communication skills (Basturkmen,

2010; Daoud, 1998). The traditional didactic triangle assumes a more homogeneous learner base, making it difficult for practitioners to address all learners' needs simultaneously (Tahririan & Chalak, 2019; Bougues, 2018; Hewings, 2002). Consequently, students requiring more individualized support may experience less effective learning outcomes (Hedge, 2000; Helate et al., 2022).

4. Challenges Related to ESP Content

4.1. Outdated or Rigid Content

ESP content often becomes outdated and fails to reflect rapid industry changes. In Tunisia, where sectors are modernizing, course materials may not keep pace with evolving industry practices, leaving learners ill-prepared for workplace demands (Belcher, 2009; Daoud, 1998; Jouini, 2013). Curriculum rigidity compounds this problem, limiting timely updates and reducing employability alignment.

4.2. Inflexible Curricula

Many Tunisian ESP programs operate within rigid structures that hinder adaptation to emerging industry needs or professional feedback. This is especially problematic in technology and business fields, where rapid developments necessitate agile curricula (Ben Abdallah & Bouzidi, 2018; Vangohol Jande & Ibrahim, 2021; Daoud, 1998; Khelifi, 2020). Inflexible programs fail to reflect the dynamic nature of the labor market, compromising ESP's practical relevance.

4.3. Lack of Systematic Needs Analysis

A critical shortcoming in ESP content design is the infrequent use of systematic needs analysis. Needs analysis ensures courses align with industry requirements, yet in Tunisia, its implementation remains limited, particularly in public institutions. Without structured industry feedback, curricula risk becoming disconnected from professional competencies, undermining graduate employability (Donadio, 2019; Daoud, 1998).

5. Gaps in Current Literature

Despite extensive documentation of ESP challenges—including inadequate training, limited industry collaboration, learner disengagement, and outdated content—current literature is largely descriptive and fragmented. Constructs such as industry engagement, employability skills, and market-responsive curricula are rarely operationalized, and links between needs analysis and curriculum design, materials, and assessment remain underexplored. Moreover, the didactic triangle is seldom reconceptualized to account for labor-market demands, leaving a gap in actionable, industry-informed pedagogical models.

Addressing these gaps, the present study investigates Tunisian ESP practitioners' perceptions of curriculum relevance, employability alignment, and industry collaboration, providing empirical evidence to inform the design of an industry-driven pedagogical pyramid. The following methodology details the survey-based

approach used to capture these insights and operationalize key constructs for practical application in market-responsive ESP programs.

6. Methodology

6.1. Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to investigate Tunisian ESP practitioners' perceptions of curriculum relevance, industry engagement, and employability alignment. A structured online questionnaire was developed based on a literature review and piloted with three ESP instructors to ensure clarity and content validity. The survey included both quantitative Likert-scale items and open-ended qualitative questions to capture nuanced practitioner insights.

6.2. Participants

A total of 39 Tunisian ESP practitioners participated in the study. Inclusion criteria required that participants 1) hold at least a Bachelor's degree in English or a related field, 2) have current or recent experience teaching ESP courses in a higher education or vocational context in Tunisia, and 3) be able to provide informed reflections on curriculum design and industry alignment.

Participants were recruited through professional ESP networks, academic mailing lists, and social media groups relevant to higher education language teaching. The survey was distributed across five active online groups and three institutional mailing lists, reaching an estimated 150 potential participants. Of these, 39 completed responses were returned, yielding a response rate of approximately 26%. While self-selection may influence representativeness, the participants' extensive experience and disciplinary diversity mitigate this concern.

The sample demonstrated high academic attainment, with 82.1% holding a Master's degree and the remaining participants possessing Bachelor's qualifications (see Figure 1).

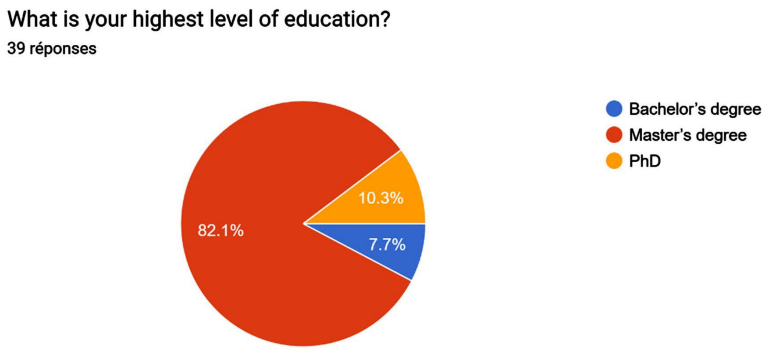

Figure 1. Participants' educational background.

This suggests that respondents are well-qualified to deliver specialized English instruction and are likely familiar with relevant pedagogical theories. In terms of

professional experience, participants reported an average of 15 years teaching ESP, indicating considerable practical insight into pedagogical challenges in Tunisia (Figure 2).

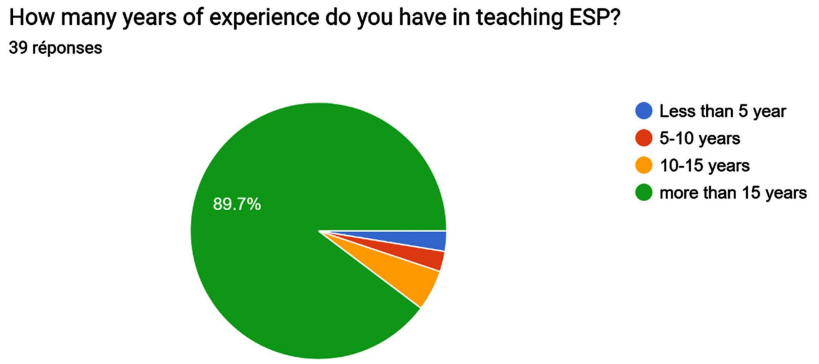

Figure 2. Participants' professional experience.

Additionally, the practitioners represented a broad spectrum of academic departments, including engineering, business, law, information technology, and healthcare (Figure 3). This diversity enhances the study's depth by capturing perspectives from multiple disciplines with distinct linguistic and industry demands.

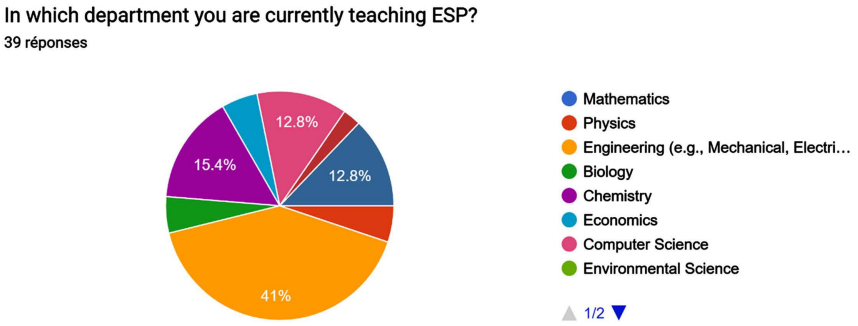

Figure 3. Distribution of ESP practitioners across academic departments.

6.3. Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected through a structured online survey designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative insights into the challenges faced by ESP practitioners in Tunisia. The survey was distributed via Facebook groups dedicated to Tunisian ESP practitioners and English language teachers, which function as active professional communities and provide effective access to a relevant participant pool (Duffy et al., 2019; Kosinski et al., 2015). An online format was selected for its efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and ability to reach participants across different regions of Tunisia (Wright, 2005), particularly those not easily accessible through institutional channels (Roberts & Allen, 2015).

The survey included closed-ended items addressing demographic and profes-

sional characteristics, as well as open-ended questions capturing practitioners' perceptions of curriculum relevance, needs analysis practices, and industry collaboration (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participation was voluntary, and anonymity and confidentiality were ensured in accordance with ethical research guidelines (British Educational Research Association [BERA], 2018). The instrument was developed by the researcher and administered via Google Forms, enabling broad accessibility and real-time data collection while encouraging honest responses (Evans & Mathur, 2005; Wright, 2005).

To enhance methodological transparency, the survey was structured around clearly defined constructs derived from the literature. Table 1 below summarizes the survey constructs, item counts, response scales, representative items, and reliability indices. All multi-item scales demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha \geq 0.76$), while single-item measures were limited to objective demographic and professional background variables.

Table 1. Survey constructs, item characteristics, and reliability.

Construct	Purpose	Number of Items	Response Scale	Example Item	Reliability
Industry Engagement	Measures the extent of collaboration between ESP practitioners and industry stakeholders	5	5-point Likert scale	(1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)	Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$
Employability Skills Alignment	Assesses perceived alignment between ESP instruction and employability-related competencies	6	5-point Likert scale	"ESP courses help students develop skills relevant to their future professional roles."	Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$
Market-Responsive Curriculum	Evaluates curriculum flexibility and responsiveness to labor-market needs	4	5-point Likert scale	"The ESP curriculum can be adapted to emerging industry requirements."	Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$
Demographic and Professional Background	Collects participant profile information	6	Multiple choice / short answer	"Years of ESP teaching experience"	Single-item (objective)
Open-Ended Reflections	Captures qualitative insights into challenges and practices	3	Open-ended	"Describe the main challenges you face in aligning ESP teaching with industry needs."	Not applicable

6.4. Procedure

Data collection was conducted over a six-week period (15 February-30 March 2025). The research process began with the development and pilot testing of the online survey using Google Forms. The initial version was reviewed by five ESP practitioners to assess clarity, content relevance, and technical functionality. Feedback from this pilot phase informed revisions to the survey items, enhancing instrument validity (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010).

The finalized survey was distributed through selected Facebook groups for Tunisian ESP practitioners and English language teachers with active membership and engagement. Participation was voluntary, the study purpose was clearly stated, and informed consent was obtained electronically prior to survey completion. Weekly reminder posts were used to increase response rates. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured, and no personally identifiable data were collected. Using social media as the primary dissemination platform enabled access to a geographically diverse sample of ESP practitioners and proved effective given logistical constraints and the widespread use of Facebook among Tunisian educators (Roberts & Allen, 2015; Kosinski et al., 2015).

6.5. Data Analysis

The data collected through the online survey were analyzed using quantitative methods to better understand the challenges faced by ESP practitioners in Tunisia. Closed-ended questions, including multiple-choice and Likert-scale items, were examined using descriptive statistics to explore respondents' demographic profiles (e.g., qualifications, experience, and departmental affiliations) and their views on curriculum relevance, needs analysis, and flexibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Frequencies, percentages, and mean scores were calculated using SPSS, enabling efficient data processing and the identification of key patterns and trends (Field, 2013).

6.6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were fundamental throughout the research process to protect participants' rights and ensure the integrity of the study. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their role before completing the survey, with an explicit informed consent statement emphasizing voluntary participation and confidentiality (APA, 2017). No personal identifying information was collected, and demographic data was anonymized and securely stored (BERA, 2018). Participation was voluntary, and respondents could skip questions if they felt uncomfortable, respecting their autonomy (Robson, 2011). Data were securely stored in password-protected files and analyzed in aggregate form, ensuring no individual identification. Once analysis was complete, data were deleted per institutional data protection policies (University of Oxford, 2017). Efforts were made to minimize harm by allowing participants to skip distressing questions, and the researcher was available to address any concerns during or after participation.

7. Findings and Discussion

7.1. Challenges Faced by ESP Practitioners

The findings reveal that the most significant challenge faced by ESP practitioners in Tunisia is course design, reported by 71.8% of participants (see **Figure 4**). This reflects a wider issue in ESP contexts lacking standardized curricula and adequate

teacher training (Ben Abdallah & Bouzidi, 2018; Fălăuș, 2017). Globally, this concern is echoed by Basturkmen (2010), who notes that ESP course design requires balancing general language instruction with specialized content—an area where many educators lack both linguistic and subject-matter expertise.

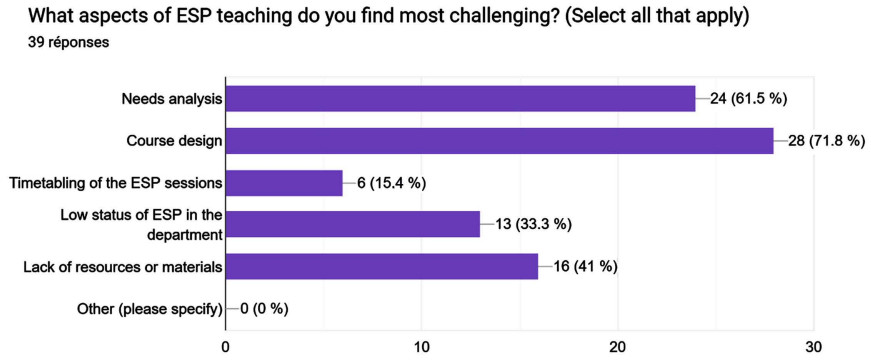

Figure 4. Challenges faced by ESP practitioners.

Needs analysis emerged as the second most reported challenge (61.5%). Effective ESP teaching relies on systematic needs assessment to align course content with learners' future professional requirements (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In Tunisia, however, needs analysis is often informal or neglected, especially in public universities, resulting in poorly targeted instruction (Ben Abdallah & Bouzidi, 2018; Farah & Ayed, 2017).

The third challenge, cited by 41% of respondents, concerns resource limitations, including outdated materials, inadequate access to technology, and insufficient teacher development. Enesi, Vrapi, and Trifoni (2021) emphasize that resource constraints negatively impact instructional quality, a situation particularly acute in under-resourced Tunisian institutions (Bougues, 2018; Broken Chalk, 2023).

Finally, 33.3% of participants highlighted the low institutional status of ESP as a barrier. This reflects a persistent perception of ESP as peripheral within academic departments, limiting its integration into core curricula and reducing motivation among educators (Daoud, 1998; Triki, 2020). As Belcher (2009) notes, institutional recognition of ESP significantly influences its perceived value, affecting both teaching quality and learner outcomes.

Although less frequently reported, the low status of ESP remains a critical issue. It compounds other challenges, such as resource scarcity and curriculum stagnation, and underscores the need for systemic reforms to elevate the role of ESP in Tunisia's higher education landscape (**Figure 5**).

7.2. Challenges Faced by ESP Learners

The findings revealed several persistent challenges faced by English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners, particularly in higher education contexts. One of the most pressing issues reported by over 43% of the ESP practitioners' (participants)

was the presence of mixed-level ESP classes. Such heterogeneity in language proficiency levels often results in a learning environment that is difficult to manage pedagogically, making it challenging for instructors to design tasks that cater effectively to all learners (Hyland, 2006). Learners at lower proficiency levels may feel overwhelmed, while more advanced learners might experience a lack of challenge, leading to reduced engagement and motivation (Alharthi, 2020).

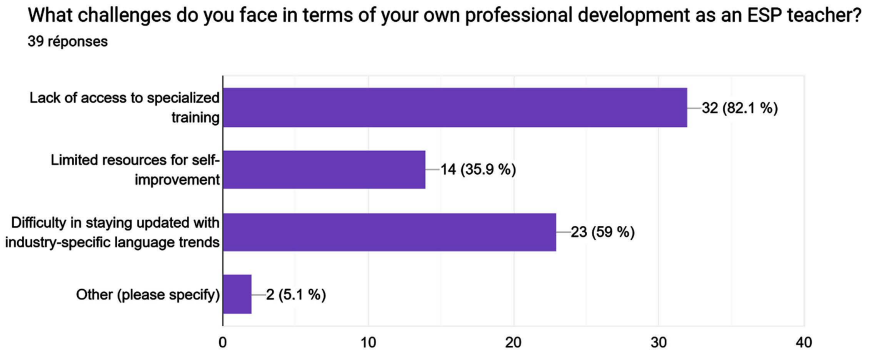

Figure 5. Reasons attributed to the challenges encountered by the ESP practitioner.

Closely related to this issue is the lack of learner motivation and limited engagement with ESP courses, also reported by a comparable percentage of respondents. Motivation is a critical factor in second language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2001), and its absence can significantly hinder the learning process. In ESP settings, where learners may not immediately see the relevance of course content to their specific fields, the challenge of fostering motivation is compounded. Without a clear understanding of the utility of ESP courses, learners may fail to invest the necessary effort and attention (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Furthermore, the inability to effectively develop learners' soft skills—such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving—was attributed to the insufficient time available for conducting a thorough needs analysis. ESP instruction relies heavily on understanding the specific linguistic and professional needs of learners (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). However, the lack of time for such analysis is often due to institutional constraints, including the misalignment between ESP practitioners' academic affiliations and departmental expectations. Practitioners are frequently assigned to unrelated departments simply to meet required teaching hours, which undermines the specialization and contextualization needed in ESP teaching (Basturkmen, 2010).

Although a smaller proportion of participants (15.4%) cited it, another notable challenge is the ESP practitioner's inability to address diverse learning styles. While not the most frequently reported issue, it nonetheless reflects an underlying pedagogical concern. The diversity of learners' cognitive and learning preferences requires adaptive teaching methods, which many ESP practitioners may not be trained or resourced to implement (Reid, 1995). As such, even when this issue affects fewer learners, its impact on learning outcomes can be significant.

Overall, these findings highlight the multifaceted nature of the challenges in ESP instruction, where institutional, pedagogical, and learner-related issues intersect. Addressing these challenges requires both structural reforms at the institutional level and targeted professional development for ESP instructors (Ghedamsi, 2013) (**Figure 6**).

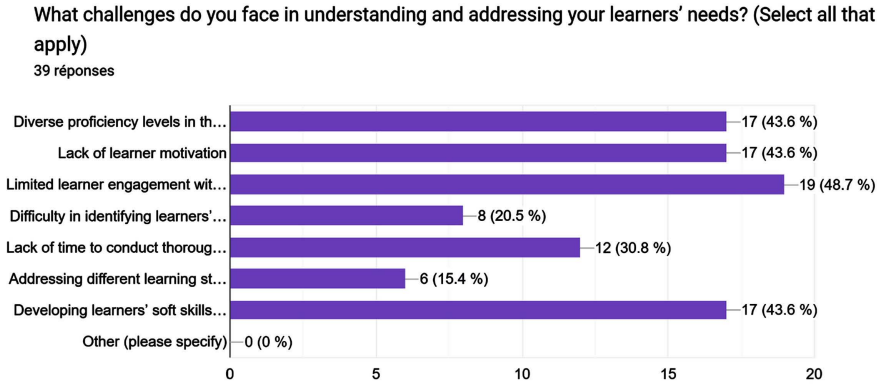

Figure 6. Challenges faced by ESP learners.

These challenges might be further justified by the ESP learners' neutral responses to the ESP course content, as illustrated in **Figure 7** below. The prevalence of neutral attitudes suggests a possible disconnect between the course materials and the learners' perceived needs or expectations. Neutral responses often indicate indifference, which can stem from a lack of personalization or perceived relevance in the curriculum (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). This indifference may reinforce the previously reported issues of low motivation and limited engagement with the course.

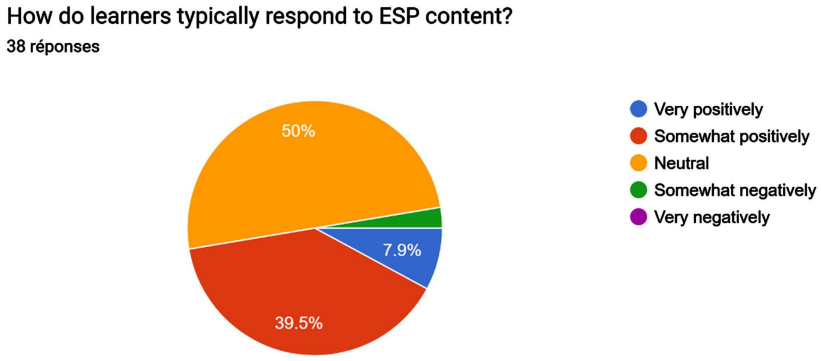

Figure 7. ESP learners' responses to the ESP content.

From a pedagogical standpoint, when learners do not find the course content engaging or directly applicable to their field of study or future professional contexts, their investment in learning naturally diminishes (Dörnyei, 2001). **Figure 7**'s findings underscore the need for a more rigorous and systematic ESP needs analysis process. Without aligning course content to learners' specific goals and

real-world applications, instructors risk delivering a curriculum that learners perceive as generic and unhelpful.

This alignment issue is further complicated by institutional challenges, such as time constraints and the frequent assignment of ESP practitioners to unrelated departments, which can hinder both the customization of materials and the integration of soft skills development (Basturkmen, 2010). Hence, the neutral learner responses serve as a quantifiable reflection of deeper structural and pedagogical issues within the ESP context.

When it comes to ensuring the relevance of ESP course content to learners' professional fields, the findings presented in **Figure 8** highlight a concerning trend. A significant majority of participants (60.5%) reported that they do not prioritize this aspect in their course design. This data point reinforces the previously discussed challenges, particularly the limited learner engagement, low motivation, and the misalignment between course content and learners' professional needs. Despite these issues being well-documented in ESP literature (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Basturkmen, 2010), the findings indicate that many practitioners continue to neglect the core ESP principle of relevance.

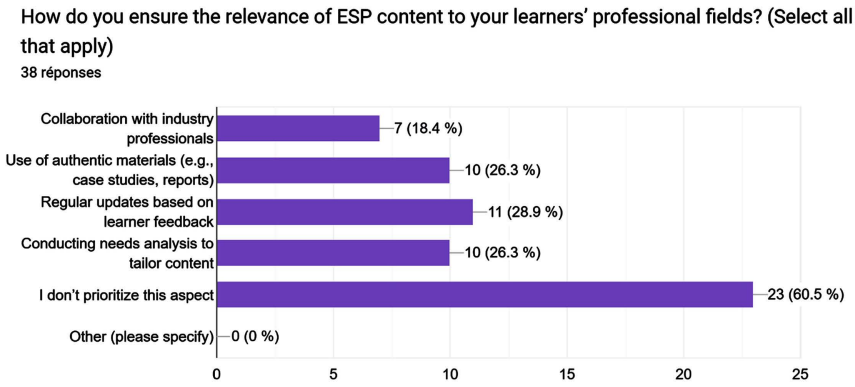

Figure 8. ESP practitioners' strategies for ensuring the relevance of course content to learners' professional fields.

Although some participants acknowledged implementing strategies such as collaborating with industry professionals (18.4%), using authentic materials—including case studies and technical reports (26.3%)—conducting needs analysis (26.3%), and relying on learner feedback for regular updates (28.9%), these practices appear to be inconsistently applied and are often constrained by institutional or time limitations. More importantly, these strategies—while valuable—were earlier identified as existing challenges due to a lack of institutional support, limited time, and inadequate training for ESP practitioners.

Therefore, while some individual efforts toward relevancy are evident, they do not amount to a systematic or professionally tailored ESP syllabus. Without sustained institutional support and structured frameworks for curriculum development, these sporadic practices fall short of creating a needs-based, contextually appropriate ESP program, as emphasized by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998).

7.3. Challenges Faced with ESP Content

When it comes to the challenges associated with course and syllabus design in ESP contexts, the participants emphasized two major issues: the lack of relevant materials and the lack of collaboration with industry professionals, each reported by approximately 67% of the respondents, as illustrated in **Figure 9** below. These two challenges appear to be closely interconnected, as the absence of authentic, field-specific input and collaboration significantly impedes the development of contextually relevant course content.

One critical consequence of these challenges, also highlighted in **Figure 9**, is the difficulty in aligning ESP content with current industry standards. Without collaboration with industry stakeholders or access to up-to-date professional materials, practitioners struggle to ensure that learners are acquiring the language and skills necessary for real-world professional contexts (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Basturkmen, 2010). This misalignment can result in courses that are overly theoretical or outdated, failing to meet learners' actual professional communication needs.

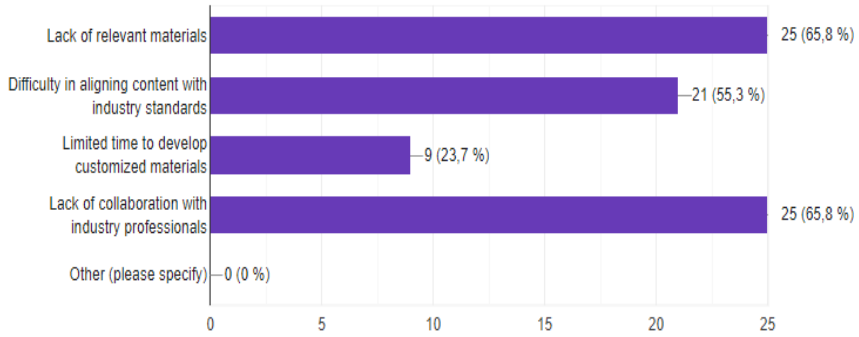

Figure 9. Challenges faced by ESP practitioners in selecting and developing appropriate course content.

Moreover, this situation is further exacerbated by limited time available for the development of customized materials. Time constraints—often due to high teaching loads or administrative duties—limit the practitioner's ability to research, adapt, or create industry-specific resources. As a result, many ESP instructors are compelled to rely on generic or non-specialized materials, which further detract from the quality and relevance of the curriculum (Hyland, 2006; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

7.4. ESP Practioners' Perception of the Role of the Industry in ESP Teaching

The obtained data demonstrate a significant appreciation among ESP practitioners regarding the role of industry collaboration in the design of ESP courses. As illustrated in **Figure 10**, nearly 72% of the participants indicated that industry involvement is "very helpful" in addressing the challenges they face during course and syllabus development. An additional 15.7% of respondents considered it to be

"somewhat helpful", further reinforcing the perceived value of industry input. These results suggest a strong consensus on the importance of aligning ESP instruction with real-world professional practices, and they highlight the need for stronger and more systematic partnerships between academic institutions and industry stakeholders. As Basturkmen (2010) and Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) argue, such collaboration is essential for ensuring that ESP courses are relevant, up-to-date, and effectively tailored to meet learners' professional communication needs.

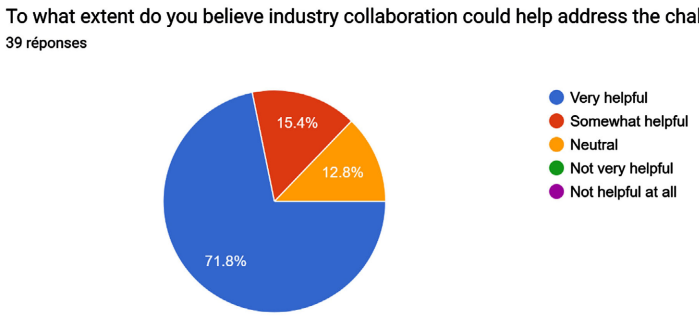

Figure 10. ESP practitioners' perceptions of the impact of industry collaboration on addressing course design challenges.

8. Industry-Driven ESP Framework

Based on the findings obtained through this research, we propose the adoption of an industry-driven ESP framework to design more relevant, engaging, and motivating content that aligns closely with current industrial demands. Unlike traditional ESP approaches rooted in the didactic triangle—where content was primarily shaped by the interaction between teacher, learner, and subject matter—our suggested model repositions the industry at the apex of a pyramid structure. In this revised model, the industry's evolving language needs guide curriculum design, while teachers and learners form the supportive base, responding dynamically to industrial expectations. This shift reflects the necessity for ESP instruction to not only teach language skills, but also foster workplace readiness and professional communication in line with real-world practices. This model is explained in Figure 11 below.

As illustrated in Figure 12, the findings of this study emphasize the significance of actively engaging the industry in the ESP teaching and learning process**,** a step that could substantially enhance the effectiveness and relevance of ESP instruction. Notably, 61.5% of the participants indicated that such collaboration would facilitate the provision of authentic materials**,** such as technical manuals, industry reports, and real-life case studies. This aligns with Gatehouse (2001), who asserts that authentic materials drawn directly from the professional context contribute to greater learner motivation and contextualized learning.

Moreover, the dynamic and rapidly evolving nature of industrial sectors has led to a corresponding shift in the language and communication needs of profession-

als. As Hutchinson and Waters (1987) observe, ESP is a learner-centered approach that must adapt to changing needs, and therefore, frequent updates to ESP course content are essential. This could explain why approximately 80% of respondents emphasized the importance of industry feedback to ensure the relevance of ESP materials. Engaging industry stakeholders not only supports content alignment with professional realities but also encourages responsive curriculum design (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

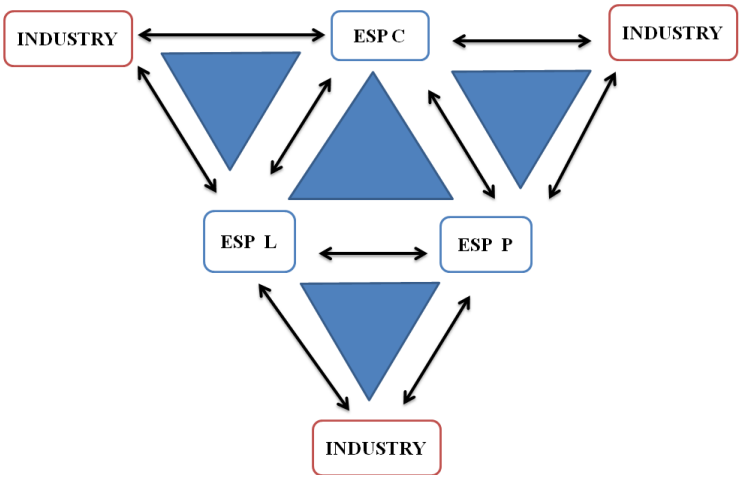

Figure 11. The industry-driven ESP model.

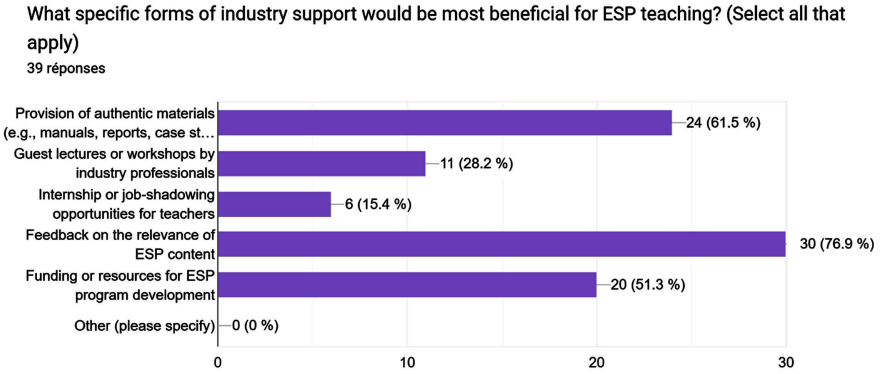

Figure 12. Participants' perceptions of the industry's role in enhancing ESP teaching and content relevance.

In addition to content-related benefits, 51.3% of participants believe that involving industry can also facilitate funding opportunities for ESP program development. This supports Belcher's (2006) view that sustainable ESP programs often require institutional support and external partnerships. Furthermore, while a smaller proportion (28.2%) highlighted the value of guest lectures and workshops by industry professionals, such initiatives can bridge the gap between classroom knowledge and workplace communication, reinforcing content authenticity and exposing learners to disciplinary discourse in practice.

Interestingly, although only 15.4% of respondents suggested it, the idea that in-

dustry could offer internship or job-shadowing opportunities for ESP teachers presents a valuable avenue. Such professional immersion could give educators first-hand insight into hard and soft skill demands, reinforcing the grounding of ESP programs in authentic, field-specific contexts. As Anthony (2018) suggests, teacher awareness of real-world communicative practices is critical to designing learner-relevant ESP instruction.

In sum, these findings reinforce the argument for a paradigm shift toward an industry-driven ESP framework, in which the role of the industry is not peripheral but central—informing, supporting, and continuously shaping ESP course design.

8.1. Reframing the Teacher-Content Dynamic through Industry Engagement in ESP

Figure 13 illustrates that involving industry in ESP instruction can significantly strengthen the relationship between practitioners and the content they deliver. This supports Dudley-Evans and St John's (1998) assertion that effective ESP relies on content grounded in real workplace communication needs. In this study, 64.1% of respondents indicated that industry collaboration facilitates access to current, field-specific materials, enhancing authenticity and relevance. The same percentage noted that sharing up-to-date industry trends ensures content remains aligned with rapidly evolving sectors, as emphasized by Basturkmen (2010).

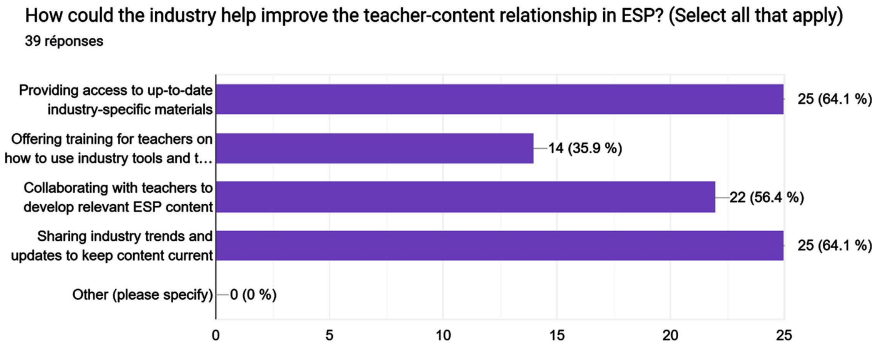

Figure 13. Perceived impact of industry engagement on ESP content development and teacher support.

Furthermore, 56.4% agreed that co-developing content with industry professionals improves instructional relevance. This aligns with Belcher's (2006) view that ESP materials are most effective when co-constructed with subject-matter experts, allowing for close integration of language and technical demands. Additionally, nearly 40% of participants saw value in industry-supported teacher training, particularly in familiarizing educators with professional tools and practices. As Anthony (2018) notes, such exposure helps teachers deliver more targeted, field-relevant instruction.

Overall, these findings reinforce the importance of industry-academic collaboration in building responsive ESP programs that meet—and anticipate—the dynamic needs of the professional world.

8.2. Reconfiguring the Teacher-Learner Dynamic through Industry Engagement in ESP

The integration of industry into ESP teaching offers significant potential to reshape the traditional teacher-learner dynamic, fostering more collaborative, context-aware, and professionally relevant instruction. According to the findings, 79.5% of participants believe that industry involvement would support teacher training, equipping educators with both pedagogical and field-specific knowledge. This aligns with Anthony's (2018) view that ESP practitioners must possess expertise in both language and subject matter—an area often overlooked in standard training programs.

A similar proportion of respondents emphasized that industry input provides valuable insights into learners' future workplace needs, enabling the design of more learner-centered instruction. As Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) note, understanding the target professional context is essential for effective ESP. Direct engagement with industry allows teachers to align their methods with real-world expectations.

Additionally, 40% of participants reported that collaboration could support real-world projects or simulations, encouraging a shift toward experiential, task-based learning (Basturkmen, 2010). Another 30.8% highlighted the potential for mentorship programs, giving learners direct access to professionals and up-to-date industry practices. This approach promotes active learning, with teachers acting as facilitators and students as engaged participants (Hyland, 2006).

Although only 23% acknowledged that industry input may help address learner diversity, this highlights the need for adaptable pedagogy. As Belcher (2006) argues, ESP learners often have varied goals and backgrounds, requiring instruction that is responsive and inclusive.

In summary, embedding industry perspectives into ESP strengthens the teacher-learner relationship by making it more interactive and grounded in learners' future professional realities. This transformation not only enhances instructional quality but also improves learner preparedness for workplace communication (**Figure 14**).

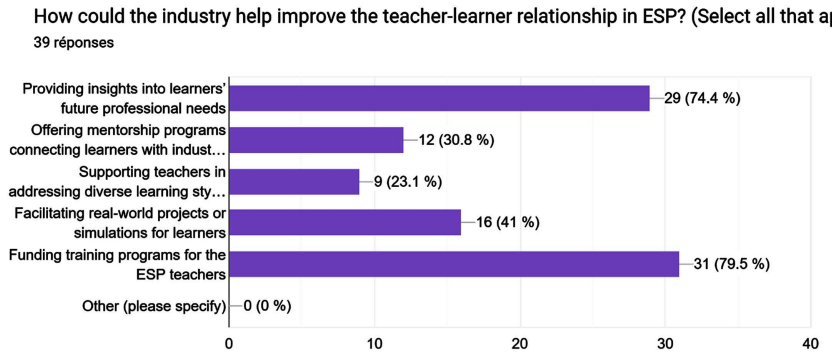

Figure 14. Participants' perceived impacts of industry engagement on the teacher-learner relationship in ESP.

Industry collaboration plays a vital role in increasing the authenticity and relevance of ESP content, thereby deepening learner engagement. According to the findings, 71.8% of respondents believe that industry partnerships help provide real-world materials tailored to learners' professional needs. This supports Gatehouse (2001), who emphasizes the value of authentic resources—such as manuals, reports, and case studies—in developing workplace-relevant language skills and boosting learner motivation.

Furthermore, 77% of participants highlighted the value of industry feedback in aligning learning outcomes with actual job market expectations. Consistent with Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), such feedback ensures ESP instruction remains responsive to the target professional context. Through ongoing interaction with industry experts, educators can better adapt their teaching to meet real communication demands.

Additionally, 46.2% of participants noted the importance of offering learners practical opportunities to apply their ESP skills in real-world contexts. Whether through internships, collaborative projects, or simulations, these experiences bridge the gap between classroom learning and workplace application. As Basturkmen (2010) argues, such experiential learning supports deeper comprehension and retention, as learners engage with language in meaningful, professional settings.

In sum, industry collaboration enhances the learner-content connection by ensuring ESP materials are both linguistically and contextually aligned with workplace realities. This alignment fosters more purposeful learning experiences and better prepares students for real-world communication challenges (**Figure 15**).

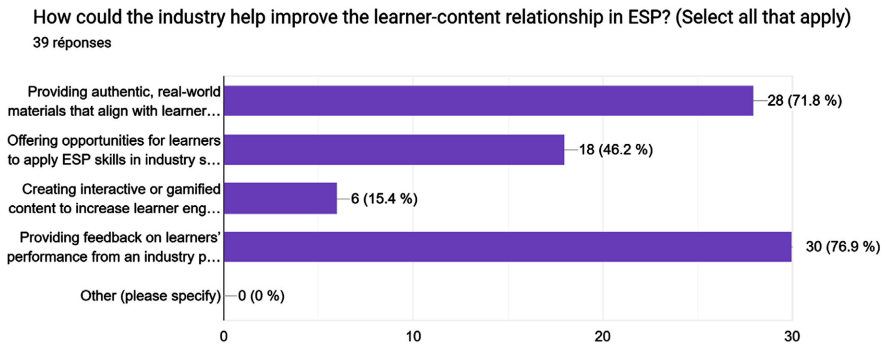

Figure 15. Participants' perceptions of the industry contributions to enhancing learner-content interaction in ESP.

9. Implications

The findings point to several key implications for ESP curriculum design, teacher development, and industry-academic collaboration. First, participants strongly supported the involvement of industry in ESP education, highlighting the need for formal partnerships with professional sectors. Such collaboration ensures that course content remains relevant, authentic, and aligned with current workplace demands. To achieve this, educational institutions should move beyond textbook-based instruction and actively involve industry experts in syllabus design and ma-

terial selection.

Second, the role of industry in supporting teacher training emerged as a significant theme. ESP educators require continuous professional development that incorporates domain-specific knowledge and practical skills. Institutions should prioritize training programs that help teachers effectively integrate linguistic and technical competencies. Additionally, industry mentorship and access to real-world learning environments can provide students with valuable experiential learning opportunities, enhancing both communicative competence and job readiness.

Finally, the study emphasizes the need for ESP curricula to be dynamic and feedback-driven. Regular input from industry stakeholders should inform course updates to ensure responsiveness to learners' evolving needs. This approach fosters a more relevant and effective learning experience, equipping students with the language and professional skills necessary for success. Overall, the findings advocate for a more integrated and collaborative ESP model, where educators, learners, and industry work together to strengthen professional communication and employability outcomes.

10. Recommendations for Overcoming Challenges in ESP Education

1) From Didactic Triangle to Industry-Driven Pyramid

ESP should shift from the traditional teacher-learner-content model to an industry-centered pyramid, where industry defines competencies and shapes content to ensure graduates are job-ready (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013).

2) The Teacher's Evolving Role

Teachers now act as facilitators, connecting academic content with industry needs. This role requires ongoing training in technological tools, domain-specific language, and industry-relevant skills (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Basturkmen, 2010). Teacher development must prioritize the ability to adapt curricula using industry input.

3) The Learner's Active Role

Learners are no longer passive recipients but active participants, expected to take ownership of their learning and develop both technical and soft skills (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Methods such as project-based learning, internships, and simulations bridge classroom learning with real-world application.

4) Content Relevance and Flexibility

ESP content must be flexible, dynamic, and industry-aligned. Fixed curricula should give way to regular needs analysis to keep pace with evolving market demands (Laaribi, 2015; Belcher, 2009; Swales, 2000). This ensures focus on specialized vocabulary, communication strategies, and employability skills.

11. Conclusion

In conclusion, the evolving demands of the global job market require a significant shift in the approach to ESP education. Moving from the traditional didactic tri-

angle to an industry-driven pyramid model, where the industry occupies the apex, represents a necessary adaptation to the changing needs of the workplace. This transition ensures that ESP programs remain relevant and responsive to the requirements of employers, while also preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

By placing the industry at the center of the educational process, ESP programs can ensure that their graduates are equipped with the language skills and competencies needed for success in the globalized workforce. The roles of the teacher, learner, and content must evolve to support this model, with teachers becoming facilitators, learners becoming active participants, and content remaining flexible and responsive to industry needs. The result is an educational model that is not only relevant to the job market but also capable of adapting to the rapidly changing demands of global industries.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

Alharthi, A. N. (2020). Investigating the Challenges Faced by ESP Learners in Saudi EFL Context. *International Journal of English Language Education, 8,* 29-37. https://doi.org/10.5296/ijele.v8i2.16925

American Psychological Association (APA) (2017). *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (2002, Amended Effective June 1, 2010, and January 1, 2017).*

Anthony, L. (2018). *Teaching English for Specific Purposes: A Practical Guide.* Routledge.

Ayadi, H. (2011). ESP Learners' Needs Analysis in Higher Education: A Tunisian Case Study. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 2,* 567-575.

Basturkmen, H. (2010). *Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Belcher, D. (2006). *English for Specific Purposes in Theory and Practice.* University of Michigan Press.

Belcher, D. (2009). *English for Specific Purposes in Theory and Practice.* University of Michigan Press.

Ben Abdallah, A., & Bouzidi, R. (2018). ESP Practitioners: Bridging the Gap between Research and Education. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education, 8,* 1-12.

Bougues, F. (2018). Challenges of ESP Teaching in Higher Education: A Tunisian Perspective. *Journal of ESP Research, 7,* 45-60.

British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018). *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (4th ed.). https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018

Broken Chalk (2023). *Challenges Facing ESP Educators in Developing Countries.* https://www.dcc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/events/workshops/RDM-services/Oxford-RDM-policy.pdf

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.

Daoud, A. (1998). English for Specific Purposes in Tunisian Higher Education. *Revue Tu-*

nisienne de Linguistique Appliquée, 5, 23-37.

Donadio, P. (2019). Special Languages vs. Languages for Special Purposes: What's in a Name? *International Journal of Language Studies, 13,* 31-42.

Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom.* Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511667343

Dörnyei, Z., & Taguchi, T. (2010). *Questionnaires in Second Language Research: Construction, Administration, and Processing* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. J. (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A Multidisciplinary Approach.* Cambridge University Press.

Duffy, B., Smith, K., Terhanian, G., & Bremer, J. (2019). Comparing Data Collection Methods for Online Surveys. *Journal of Survey Research, 12,* 101-118.

Enesi, M., Vrapi, F., & Trifoni, A. (2021). Challenges of Teaching and Learning English Language for ESP Courses. *Journal of Educational and Social Research, 11,* 213-222. https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2021-0090

eSoft Skills (2023). *The Impact of Globalization on Employment Trends.* https://esoftskills.ie/the-impact-of-globalization-on-employment-trends/

Evans, J. R., & Mathur, A. (2005). The Value of Online Surveys. *Internet Research, 15,* 195-219. https://doi.org/10.1108/10662240510590360

Evans, S., & Green, C. (2007). *The Role of English for Specific Purposes in Education and Training.* Cambridge University Press.

Fălăuş, A. (2017). The Current Challenges of Teaching ESP. *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering, 200,* Article ID: 012059. https://doi.org/10.1088/1757-899x/200/1/012059

Farah, A., & Ayed, S. (2017). The Challenge of Teaching English for Specific Purposes in Tunisia: Current Trends and Needs. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 8,* 765-773.

Field, A. (2013). *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics* (4th ed.). Sage.

Gatehouse, K. (2001). Key Issues in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Curriculum Development. *The Internet TESL Journal, 7.* http://iteslj.org/Articles/Gatehouse-ESP.html

Ghedamsi, I. (2013). The Role of ESP in the Development of Professional Communication in Tunisia. *Journal of Applied Linguistics, 14,* 271-286.

Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom.* Oxford University Press.

Helate, T. H., Metaferia, T. F., & Gezahegn, T. H. (2022). English Language Teachers' Engagement in and Preference for Experiential Learning for Professional Development. *Heliyon, 8,* e10900. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e10900

Hewings, A. (2002). *Advanced Grammar in Context* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-Centred Approach.* Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511733031

Hyland, K. (2006). *English for Academic Purposes: An Advanced Resource Book.* Routledge.

IZA World of Labor (2022). *Globalization and Technological Progress.* https://wol.iza.org/chapters/globalization-and-technological-progress

Jouini, M. (2013). ESP Course Design and Industrial Relevance in Tunisia. *Journal of Language and Education, 1,* 34-49.

Khelifi, S. (2020). Employability Reforms in Tunisian Higher Education: A Path-Dependence Perspective. *The Journal of North African Studies, 27,* 663-690.

https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2020.1858810

Knapp, K., & Seidlhofer, B. (2009). *English as a Lingua Franca: Theorizing and Teaching English.* Oxford University Press.

Kosinski, M., Matz, S. C., Gosling, S. D., Popov, V., & Stillwell, D. (2015). Facebook as a Research Tool for Personality Prediction. *Psychological Science, 26,* 1051-1062.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). *Understanding Language Teaching: From Method to Post-Method.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Laaribi, F. (2015). The Need for Tailored ESP Programs for Tunisian Engineering Students. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Applied Linguistics* (pp. 45-58).

Labassi, T. (2010). Two ESP Projects under the Test of Time: The Case of Brazil and Tunisia. *English for Specific Purposes, 29,* 19-29. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2009.08.002

Paltridge, B., & Starfield, S. (2013). *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes.* Wiley-Blackwell.

Reid, J. M. (1995). *Learning Styles in the ESL/EFL Classroom.* Heinle & Heinle.

Roberts, C., & Allen, P. (2015). Conducting Online Surveys in Educational Research. *Research in Education, 93,* 45-60.

Robinson, P. (1991). *ESP Today: A Practitioner's Guide.* Prentice Hall.

Robson, C. (2011). *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers* (3rd ed.). Wiley.

Suherman, A. (2021). Students' Perceptions of the Challenges of ESP Courses: A Study from an Indonesian University. *Indonesian Journal of EFL and Linguistics, 8,* 193-205. https://doi.org/10.21462/ijefl.v8i2.645

Swales, J. M. (2000). *English in Academic and Research Settings.* Cambridge University Press.

Tahririan, M. H., & Chalak, A. (2019). English for Specific Purposes (ESP): The State of the Art. *International Journal of Language Studies, 13,* 135-141.

Triki, F. (2020). English for Specific Purposes in Tunisia: Bridging the Gap between Education and Industry Needs. *Journal of Higher Education Studies, 7,* 98-113.

University of Oxford (2017). *Research Data Management: Guidance for Researchers.*

Vangohol Jande, L., & Ibrahim, N. M. (2021). Challenges of Teaching ESP: A Review. *LSP International Journal, 8,* 1-8. https://doi.org/10.11113/lspi.v8.16334

Wright, K. B. (2005). Researching Internet-Based Populations: Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Survey Research, Online Questionnaire Authoring Software Packages, and Web Survey Services. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 10,* JCMC1034. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2005.tb00259.x