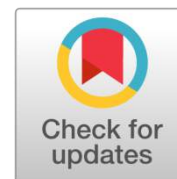


## NEEDS ANALYSIS IN ESP AS A MOTIVATOR AND MEANS TO OPTIMISE ACADEMIC ESP COURSES

Albena Stefanova and Denitsa Bozeva

University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria



### Abstract

The paper presents the results of a needs analysis conducted to optimise the academic ESP courses at a Bulgarian university. There are few studies on the issue in Bulgaria unlike the global situation with universities and employers studying the ESP needs of their students and workforce regularly. Hence by carrying out a survey of the students at this particular university along with students from another six local universities and fifteen universities from eleven countries worldwide, all with the same profile, the research team expected to gather reliable information about the course parameters that require improvement. The student sample includes 939 local and 167 foreign students. In addition, a survey of 32 local faculty teaching language and/or subject matter was conducted to triangulate data and strengthen the research contribution to the enhanced course effectiveness based on the greater motivation for ESP acquisition by formulating recommendations for syllabi development.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes, ESP, needs analysis, needs analysis in ESP, ESP courses

#### Article history:

Received: 13 March 2023

Reviewed: 04 April 2023

Accepted: 19 May 2023

Published: 20 June 2023

#### Contributor roles:

Conceptualization, Investigation, Project Administration, Supervision - A.S (lead), D. B. (supporting); Data curation, Formal Analysis, Validation, Visualization, Software - D. B. (lead), A. S. (supporting); Methodology, Resources, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing A. S., D. B. (equal)

Copyright © 2023 Albena Stefanova & Denitsa Bozeva



This open access article is published and distributed under a [CC BY-NC 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) which permits non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at [albena.stefanova@unwe.bg](mailto:albena.stefanova@unwe.bg). If you want to use the work commercially, you must first get the authors' permission.

**Citation:** Stefanova, A. & Bozeva, D. (2023). Needs Analysis in ESP as a Motivator and Means to Optimise Academic ESP Courses. *English Studies at NBU*, 9(1), 21-38. <https://doi.org/10.33919/esnbu.23.1.2>

**Funding:** This work was supported by the UNWE Research Programme (Research Grant №6/2021).


**Albena Stefanova** is a Senior Lecturer at the University of National and World Economy (UNWE), Sofia, Bulgaria, and has a PhD in Methodology of Teaching Modern Languages. She has been teaching English to students of philosophy, policing, law, economics, and political studies for over twenty years. Her main interests are in ESP and translation.

Email: [albena.stefanova@unwe.bg](mailto:albena.stefanova@unwe.bg)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9757-3221>

**Denitsa Bozeva** is a doctoral student at the Department of Statistics and Econometrics at the University of National and World Economy (UNWE), Sofia, Bulgaria. She has bachelor's and master's degrees in Statistics and Econometrics and has finished an economics high school profiled in banking.

Email: [denica\\_bozeva@unwe.bg](mailto:denica_bozeva@unwe.bg)

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1478-8722>

## **ESP around the world**

For a number of decades, English for specific purposes (ESP) has been in the focus of the English language community due to the political hegemony of the USA after World War II, the intense international cooperation, globalisation, modern communication and information technologies (ICT), scientific advance, free movement of workforce, the development of international tourism and the trends in education and language teaching. Hence, the needs of ESP for a variety of businesses and the introduction of early foreign language education in school as well as the study of two foreign languages at secondary-school level. In the tertiary sector, ESP courses are either courses in English for academic purposes (EAP) aimed at helping learners function in university contexts or in ESP with a focus on a specific area related to the profile of the particular academic institution and aimed at preparing undergraduates as professionals who are competitive at the domestic and global labour market and bring value to society within a knowledge-based economy. In terms of language teaching, either option involves the development and improvement of functional communicative competence. The approach to ESP and the academic ESP course, in particular, depends on stakeholders' views and needs.

### **ESP courses at UNWE and the ESP needs of contemporary students**

The major factors determining the design of university ESP course syllabi include national educational policy, academic autonomy, business and learner needs. In Bulgaria, educational legislation and policies are intended to prepare the young generations for effective and efficient career realisation by the following steps: a) introducing the compulsory learning of two foreign languages in school with expected levels B2 for the first foreign language and B1 for the second one in the last grade at school; b) matriculation exam at the end of the final grade, which provides an opportunity for university admission; c) academic ESP courses giving specialised linguistic knowledge and skills that a modern professional needs in order to function successfully in occupational contexts.

The University of National and World Economy (UNWE) is the largest economic university in Southeastern Europe with a total number of students amounting to 20 000. They all study English but have different levels of communicative competence

because depending on the programme they have a language admission exam. Thus, for the programmes admitting without an English language admission exam there are different level ESP courses, usually A2-B2 of CEFR (The Common European Framework of Reference for languages of the Council of Europe, 2018). For the ESP course for the programmes with an admission exam (B2 of CEFR) there is an option to use the result from the matriculation exam and the two-year academic course in specialised English is followed by a state exam of two parts – a written and an oral one at the C1 level of CEFR. The courses for programmes without a language admission exam do not involve a state exam and are based on ongoing assessment only. In either case, though, learners are prepared to listen to and understand professional information, to design and give business presentations, negotiate, hold meetings, write business letters and reports, summarise, present positions, arguments and opinions, translate to and from the target language, read scientific and specialised business texts. Along with this, they acquire universal skills they can transfer into the study of other foreign languages or another area of work and knowledge to contribute to their community and personal development. Such skills are, for instance, teamwork, leadership, citizenship, and critical thinking. The courses are in line with the university vision that is to give its students high quality modern education and provide the business with competent and knowledgeable workforce. However, given the fast-changing world we live in, it becomes a must to explore the needs of the modern generations as well as their attitudes to learning in general and to the acquisition of ESP in order to optimise the effects of the academic courses offered.

Research in education and ELT has shown that generations Z and Y are strongly influenced by modern technology. In fact, from a very early age they learn how to use devices and technologies that previous generations did not. As a result, they perceive the world, interact, communicate, and learn in different ways compared to their parents, grandparents and teachers. This means that learning should be adequate to the socio-economic changes and reflect them. An example of this process is the introduction of interactive boards and textbooks, e-platforms and books, mobile communication, social media similarly to their introduction in workplaces and business relations. Offering specialised courses taught in a way that new generations find appropriate leads to

increased engagement and motivation, which in turn result in improved learner results and course effectiveness (Stefanova, 2021).

## **A Bulgarian project investigating the ESP needs of students**

### **Overview**

The project “English for a successful career: Studying the needs of students of economics and socio-political studies” is aimed at investigating the needs of the students at UNWE in order to improve and adjust the ESP courses at the university and to enhance student achievements in a way that both students and lecturers find satisfactory and rewarding. It is intended to get insights into the real needs of modern learners by analysing the attitudes and perceptions of students studying economics and socio-political studies abroad and in Bulgaria. Based on the practice and theory in ESP needs analysis, the project team conducted two surveys. This is why before the presentation of the research itself, this article makes an overview of the key concepts in ESP and ESP needs analysis as well as on the empirical experience in this area.

Carter (1983) defines the specificity of ESP by outlining three key characteristics: a specific purpose, authentic materials and self-direction. The purpose depends on the specific occupational and professional context and can be related to the acquisition and improvement of a specific language skill or skills such as writing business letters, telephone conversations, negotiating. The authentic materials provide the learning context and facilitate the acquisition of authentic response in authentic situations, while self-direction helps the language learner become a proficient user, i.e. hone functional communicative competence in English. In addition, Basturkmen (2010) emphasizes the fact that the ESP learner studies the language in order to achieve academic and professional goals related to a successful career. Hence to design an effective ESP course syllabus, an ESP practitioner has to study the needs of the particular learner(s). With this regard, Munby (1978) points to the importance of learner situational needs in order to establish the particular target language needs of each group of learners. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) distinguish target needs and educational needs. The former include the what to do in the target situation, whereas the latter involve the what to do in order to learn. Target needs are further divided into necessities (what the learner needs to function successfully in the target situation),

lacks (the gap between the material acquired and the material to be acquired by the learner in order to be functionally competent in ESP) and wants (learners' subjective perception and views of their needs).

Chambers (1980) notes that needs analysis in ESP is aimed at establishing and meeting learner needs based on the analysis of the communication in the target situation. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) see it as an analysis of data such as professional information about the learner, lacks, information about their communicative competence, information about the professional communication in the learner's field of expertise, expectations from the ESP course, educational needs. One can expand these views by adding the analysis of the target situation, discourse analysis, analysis of the current situation, learner factor analysis, analysis of the educational environment and the learner's own perception of their needs (West, 1997).

Globally, needs analysis in ESP is conducted by academicians and is focused on students' or trade workforce's needs. In the tertiary sector, the focus varies and includes different aspects: the overall importance of ESP acquisition for a successful career (Lee, 2016; Bacha and Bahous, 2008), the needs of specific skills (Alsamadani, 2017; Kim, 2006; Basturkmen, 1998; Li So-mui and Mead, 2000), the needs profile (Ferris, 1998; Chia, Johnson, Chia and Olive, 1999), the relation between needs and learner nationality and status (Kim, 2006; Bolsher and Smalkoski, 2002), the development of teaching materials (Gu et al., 2019), course syllabus (Ibrahim, 2020). In terms of workforce ESP needs, researchers study different industries: textile and clothing (Sakr, 2001), private hospitals (Mian and Sarwar, 2016), banking (Liu and Zhang, 2020). Locally, there are very few studies of the ESP needs of the students in Bulgaria and in the region. A Slovak-Bulgarian research team carried out a comparative survey of the needs of the students of veterinary medicine in Bulgaria and Slovakia (Gundasheva et al., 2016). No research was found with regard to the ESP needs of the students majoring in economics and socio-political studies. Hence, apart from the benefits that research in this area can bring to a particular university or country, there can be a contribution to the study of the ESP needs of students as a global issue.

## Methodology

The object of research is the academic ESP courses for students of economics and socio-political studies. The subject of research is the ESP needs of the students majoring in economics and socio-political studies.

Research objectives include as follows:

- 1) To check if there is a relation between course duration (number of hours) and students' motivation.
- 2) To examine the perceptions of the significance of the different skills.
- 3) To compare the perceptions of students and faculty of the need of the different skills and subskills.
- 4) To study the perceptions of students and faculty of the ways to enhance the motivation for learning and optimise academic ESP courses.

The following statistical methods are used to complete the objectives set:

a) descriptive statistics

- relative values (%) – a measure of the percentage distribution of units.
- arithmetic mean (Mean) – a measure of the centre of gravity of distribution;
- absolute values (N) – a measure for determining the number of units;
- relative values (%) – a measure of the percentage distribution of units.

b) statistical hypothesis testing

- the testing method used is a non-parametric test at "k" number of independent samples (Kruskal-Wallis test);
- parametric z test (compare column proportions)

Two surveys were conducted in the period April-October 2021. The first survey was carried out with Bulgarian and foreign students. The first surveyed were Bulgarian students and the sample included 939 students from 7 large universities in Bulgaria. Then, the research team targeted foreign students and this sample included 167 students from 15 universities in 11 countries. The second survey examined the perceptions of 32

Bulgarian faculty members teaching ESP and/or subject-matter. A structured survey consisting of 28 questions was drawn up to examine the needs of the students and a structured survey of 24 questions to examine the opinion of the teachers. In this article, the results from only a part of the questions related to course duration and the four skills are presented. The questions are of the multiple response type, which means that a respondent can choose more than one answer. In the questions, the respondents are asked about their expectations from the ESP course with the concept of “expectation” used by the authors in a general meaning encompassing Hutchinson and Waters’ target needs (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). To facilitate the comparison of the results of the three samples, the responses have been equated to sum to 100%. Therefore, statistical tests can sometimes be found to be significant, even for small differences.

### **Results and discussion**

An interesting relation was established in the survey of the Bulgarian students, namely the correlation between the respondents’ expectation to have more hours of ESP and their expectations to hone their functional communicative competence.

The expectation to have more hours is presented by using five categories: strongly disagree; disagree; neither agree, nor disagree; agree; strongly agree. The same categories are used to code student expectations with regard to ESP acquisition in the following areas of (competences within) functional communicative competence and language acquisition:

- writing
- listening
- speaking
- reading specialised texts
- specialised translation
- specialised vocabulary
- appropriate use of style and register
- communication problem-solving
- intercultural communication
- interactive tasks and work
- use of social media and the Internet
- motivation and ESP course optimisation.

Since expectations are on an ordinal scale, this allows us to find a conditional mean for each category of wants.

**Table 1.** Relation between the expectation to have an ESP course with more hours and the expectations for improvement of knowledge and skills

Expectations for knowledge and skills	Expectations to have an ESP course with more hours				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Writing	3.61	4.05	4.18	4.29	4.54
Listening	3.37	3.90	4.13	4.26	4.53
Speaking	3.52	4.06	4.22	4.39	4.62
Reading specialised texts	3.45	4.03	4.20	4.37	4.57
Grammar	3.26	3.82	4.09	4.36	4.48
Stylistic register	3.43	3.80	4.02	4.22	4.51
Resolving communication problems	3.41	3.97	4.11	4.34	4.55
Intercultural communication	3.38	3.93	4.06	4.29	4.53
Specialised translation	3.30	4.00	4.06	4.27	4.49
Specialised vocabulary	3.61	4.07	4.13	4.38	4.59
Interactive tasks	3.22	3.89	3.96	4.29	4.47
Involvement of SM and the Internet	3.28	3.77	3.95	4.23	4.38
Motivating by empowering for content creation	2.96	3.69	3.81	4.11	4.44
Motivating through course optimisation	2.98	3.59	3.83	4.09	4.44
Kruskal-Wallis test	p-value = 0.000				

\*Each value represents a particular expectation (for more ESP classes) starting from strongly disagree and going to strongly agree.

In the table above, p-value indicates the results from the Kruskal-Wallis test for a difference in the average levels of expectation between the different groups of expectations. Results show that there is a correlation between the expectations for all skills and knowledge, i.e. the stronger the students' expectation for more ESP hours, the higher their expectations to improve their knowledge and skills.



Another noteworthy finding is related to the four skills. In the study, they are divided into subskills with both students and faculty being asked about their perceptions of the significance of each subskill with regard to students' future career realisation. This way, a comparison is made between students' perceptions of the most important skills and the skills that actually matter. Faculty responses are used as benchmark responses to rate skills importance because teachers have a more reliable idea of the future application of the skills.

Writing skills are to be considered first. They include seven subskills:

- Preparing presentations
- Writing reports
- Writing formal business letters and emails
- Writing summaries
- Specialised translation
- Describing trends
- Preparing a written opinion/position on a professional topic

According to the Bulgarian students, the most important writing skill is the writing of formal letters and emails (22,2%) followed by preparing a written opinion/position on a professional topic (19,0%), while for the foreign students the most important subskills are the ones for preparing a written opinion/position on a professional topic (19,5%), making presentations (18,2%), writing formal business letters and emails (18,0%) and writing reports (17,9%). The least important ones in terms of students' career for both student groups are the same skills: for writing summaries (9,1%) and describing trends (9,9%) for the Bulgarian respondents and, respectively, for writing summaries (8,2%) and describing trends (7,5%) for the foreign ones. Unlike them, faculty attribute greater significance to the subskills for specialised translation (18,2%), describing trends (16,7%) and preparing a written opinion/position on a professional topic (15,9%). The rest of the subskills are rated with a similar percentage of significance and can be classified as equally less significant.

**Table 2.** Distribution of responses about writing skills by subskills and type of respondent

	Bulgarian students	Foreign students	Faculty
<b>Writing skills</b>	[A]	[B]	[C]
Preparing presentations	11.8%	18.2% <sup>A</sup>	12.9%
Writing reports	13.0%	17.9% <sup>A</sup>	12.9%
Writing formal business letters and emails	22.2% <sup>B,C</sup>	18.0%	10.5%
Writing summaries	9.1%	8.2%	12.9% <sup>A,B</sup>
Specialised translation	15.0% <sup>B</sup>	10.7%	18.2% <sup>A,B</sup>
Describing trends	9.9% <sup>B</sup>	7.5%	16.7% <sup>A,B</sup>
Preparing a written opinion/ position on a professional topic	19.9%	19.5%	15.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	100%	100%	100%

\* Each category is marked with a Latin letter A, B or C. Where a letter is indicated in the table, it means that there is a significant difference according to the column proportions test between the type of respondent behind the indicated letter and the type of respondent in whose column the letter is located.

The subskill all respondent groups perceive as important is the one for preparing a written opinion/position on a professional topic, followed by the subskills for specialised translation and describing trends. Bulgarian students have a statistically significant higher appreciation for the importance of these subskills compared to the foreign respondents, but it is statistically lower compared to the faculty. The rest of the subskills are classified as less important ones. There is a discrepancy with them regarding the subskill for writing official business letters and emails, which the Bulgarian students classified as important. The reverse situation is observed for the subskills for making presentations and writing reports. These subskills are indicated as important by foreign students, but they are of less importance actually. The subskill for writing summaries is assigned less importance by all groups, but there is a statistically significant difference between faculty views and the views of the other two groups. This means that students underestimate this skill to a really great extent compared to its actual significance.

Having analysed the results about writing skills, it can be concluded that there is a greater match between the opinion of Bulgarian students and that of the teachers, which means that they have a more realistic idea of the writing skills that would benefit them in the future.

The second skill considered is speaking. It is presented by subskills and includes the seven subskills:

- Describing trends
- Oral summaries
- Oral presentations
- Holding official talks
- Participating in discussions
- Negotiating
- Presenting positions

The most important speaking subskills for the Bulgarian students are the skills for participating in discussions (18,9%), for holding official talks (18,7%) and negotiating (18,6%), whereas foreign students indicate the subskills for oral presentations (20,0%) and for participating in discussions (19,9%) as the most important ones. Both groups indicate the skill for describing trends as the one of least significance with respectively 6,8% of the Bulgarian group and 8,0% of the foreign one. Compared to student respondents, faculty think that the most important subskills for students' successful career are the ones for presenting a position/making a point (20,6%) and negotiation skills (19,0%) with the skills for describing trends (6,3%) and making oral summaries (7,2%) seen as the least important ones.

**Table 3.** Distribution of responses about speaking skills by subskills and type of respondent

	Bulgarian students	Foreign students	Faculty
<b>Speaking skills</b>	[A]	[B]	[C]
Describing trends	6.8%	8.0%	6.3%
Oral summaries	9.1%	9.3%	7.2%
Oral presentations	12.4%	20.0% <sup>A</sup>	14.3%
Holding official talks	18.7% <sup>B</sup>	9.4%	15.1% <sup>B</sup>
Participating in discussions	18.9%	19.9%	17.5%
Negotiating	18.6% <sup>B</sup>	16.8%	19.0%
Presenting positions	15.5%	16.6%	20.6% <sup>B</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Each category is marked with a Latin letter A, B or C. Where a letter is indicated in the table, it means that there is a significant difference according to the column proportions test between the type of respondent behind the indicated letter and the type of respondent in whose column the letter is located.

All groups assign the greatest importance to the subskill for participating in discussions followed by the subskills for presenting a position/making a point and negotiation skills. The subskill for presenting a position is assigned a far greater importance by faculty compared to foreign students, whereas negotiation skills are felt more significant by local students than foreign ones. It can be said that in both cases the perceptions of Bulgarian students are similar to those of the faculty. The rest of the subskills can be classified as less important than the discussed ones. With them, there is a discrepancy between the views of the faculty and the foreign students as the foreign respondents see the skills for holding official talks as more important than local students and faculty. In addition, foreign respondents find the subskill for giving oral presentations more significant compared to Bulgarian ones.

The analysis of the speaking skills shows a greater match between the views of students and faculty compared to writing skills. There is once again a greater match between the perceptions of the Bulgarian student respondents and the faculty, which underlies local students' more realistic view of the speaking skills that can be beneficial for their successful career in the future.

The next skill considered is listening comprehension. It includes four subskills which are:

- Understanding informal business speech
- Understanding official speech/statements
- Understanding speakers with various accents
- Understanding specialised professional information – data, trends, processes

Bulgarian students find understanding official speech/public statements the most important subskill (30,3%). It is followed by the subskills for the listening comprehension of specialised information – data, trends, processes (28,6%). According to the local respondent students, the subskill for the listening comprehension of informal speech is the least important one in terms of students' career (18,0%). For the foreign students, the most important subskills are the listening comprehension of specialised information – data, trends, processes (34,1%) and the listening comprehension of official speech/public statements (29,1%). The least important one for them coincides with the subskill indicated by Bulgarian students – the listening comprehension of informal speech

(15,1%). According to the faculty respondents, the most important subskill is the listening comprehension of specialised information (34,9%) followed by the listening comprehension of official speech/public statements (29,1%). According to the faculty, understanding speakers with various accents is least important (16,2%).

**Table 4.** Distribution of responses about listening skills by subskills and type of respondent

	Bulgarian students	Foreign students	Faculty
<b>Listening Comprehension</b>	[A]	[B]	[C]
Accents	23.1% <sup>B</sup>	21.7%	16.2%
Informal business speech	48.0% <sup>B</sup>	15.1%	19.8%
Official business speech/public statements	30.3% <sup>B</sup>	29.1%	29.1%
Specialised professional information	28.6%	34.1%	34.9% <sup>A,B</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Each category is marked with a Latin letter A, B or C. Where a letter is indicated in the table, it means that there is a significant difference according to the column proportions test between the type of respondent behind the indicated letter and the type of respondent in whose column the letter is located.

There is no unanimity with regard to the skills significance, but both student groups have rated the subskills correctly, i.e. similarly to faculty respondents. So, the most important listening subskills are the subskills for the listening comprehension of specialised information – data, trends, processes, given greater priority by faculty than students, and the subskills for the listening comprehension of official speech/public statements, appreciated more by Bulgarian students compared to foreign respondents. For the other two subskills assigned less significance, foreign students have underestimated them compared to Bulgarian respondent students.

It can be concluded that it is not possible to say whose views match faculty ones to a greater extent – Bulgarian students’ or foreign students’ ones because the only difference between faculty and students is observed with the subskill that matters most in teachers’ opinion. Nevertheless, of the three skills dealt with so far, faculty and students’ ratings match most for this group.

The last skill considered is reading. It includes the following three subskills:

- Reading formal business correspondence
- Reading specialised scientific texts
- Reading specialised documentation: statutes, agreements, directives, etc.

According to the Bulgarian students, the most important subskill in this group is the reading of specialised documentation (40,6%) and the least important one is the reading of specialised scientific texts (24,7%). Foreign students rate these subskills similarly with the reading of specialised documentation indicated by 42,8% and the reading of specialised scientific texts – by 27,2% of the respondents respectively. Faculty respondents consider all subskills important with the reading comprehension of formal business correspondence being the most important one (35,1%) and the reading of specialised scientific texts being indicated as the least important one of all by 31,1%.

**Table 5.** Distribution of responses about reading skills by subskills and type of respondent

	Bulgarian students	Foreign students	Faculty
<b>Reading Comprehension</b>	[A]	[B]	[C]
Specialised scientific texts	24.7%	27.2%	31.1% <sup>A, B</sup>
Specialised documentation	40.6%	42.8%	33.8%
Formal business correspondence	34.7% <sup>B</sup>	30.0%	35.1% <sup>B</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	100%	100%	100%

\*Each category is marked with a Latin letter A, B or C. Where a letter is indicated in the table, it means that there is a significant difference according to the column proportions test between the type of respondent behind the indicated letter and the type of respondent in whose column the letter is located.

The subskill that all groups value the least is reading specialised scientific texts. In terms of reading formal business correspondence and by percentage, faculty and local students find it equally important, whereas foreign students assign it less significance. Overall, though, faculty see it as the most important subskill, while both student groups rank it second in significance.

The analysis of the skills for reading reveals a greater match in the perceptions of local students and faculty, which means a probably more realistic view of the benefits of this skill for students' future realisation compared to the attitudes of the foreign respondents.

## **Recommendations**

The first thing that impressed the research team during the statistical data processing was the correlation between the number of academic course hours and learner motivation. The more the hours, the greater the motivation for learning with the most common reason provided by students being the fact that if there are fewer hours they would not be able to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills and, therefore, it is pointless making any efforts to study at all. Hence a good direction to focus on is the increase in the number of course hours. If nationally and/or internationally the socio-economic situation does not allow it, then a more intense syllabus encouraging learner involvement and interaction could contribute to course optimisation and result in better learner achievements.

The results obtained for the respondents' attitude towards the four skills and the importance of their components revealed a discrepancy between faculty's and students' perceptions. Course syllabi are based on faculty and business feedback and the learner feedback given in the survey marked a direction to work in, namely, to find out what this difference is due to and to motivate students to reconsider and see the reasons why components neglected by them are more significant than other ones they find worth acquiring. This way the motivation for learning will be enhanced, which will result in improved performance and acquisition. A possible option to do this could be the raised awareness of professional context specifics and common job responsibilities based on business correspondence and communication.

Research findings can be used to optimise academic ESP courses by meeting student needs on the one hand and meeting other stakeholders' needs, on the other. This means that students should be taught based on the specific features of their generations and in the ways they perceive and acquire most fruitfully so as to meet the expectations of the other stakeholders and provide for a mutually beneficial learning and educational process. Hence by improving course syllabi and introducing novel techniques such as interactive work and assessment motivation will be ensured and enhanced along with learner engagement, which will lead to course optimisation. This, however, means greater support from university management and resources to ensure the equipment, technology and training needed.

Involvement in content creation is another major issue worth considering and incorporating in an academic course and an ESP course in particular. Even though not in the focus of this paper, the survey included questions about motivation and engagement and a question about involvement in content creation because in our practice we have noticed that learners tend to show little or no interest in topics they find boring or irrelevant. When invited to offer issues they are interested in or their friends and families are concerned with, students participate more actively in class work. However, the survey results revealed a kind of shyness or lack of confidence in this respect. If shown the benefits of content creation and the relation between the learning situation and the real-life situation at work, students feel encouraged to contribute to the course and improve their performance (Stefanova, 2021).

### References

- Alsamadani, H. (2017). Needs Analysis in ESP Context: Saudi Engineering Students as a Case study. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 8(6), 58-68. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.all.v.8n.6p.58>
- Bacha, N. N. & Bahous, R. (2008). Contrasting Views of Business Students' Writing Needs in an EFL Environment. *English for Specific Purposes*, 27, 74-93. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2007.05.001>
- Basturkmen, H. (1998). A Needs Analysis Project at Kuwait University. *English Teaching Forum*, 36(4), <http://exchanges.state.gov/forum/vols/vol36/no4/p2.htm>
- Basturkmen, H. (2010). *Developing courses in English for specific purposes*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230290518>
- Bolsher, S. & Smalkoski, K. (2002). From needs analysis to curriculum development: designing a course in health-care communication for immigrant students in the USA. *English for Specific Purposes*, 21, 59-79. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(01\)00002-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(01)00002-3)
- Carter, D. (1983). Some propositions about ESP. *The ESP Journal*, 2, 131-137. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0272-2380\(93\)90003-P](https://doi.org/10.1016/0272-2380(93)90003-P)
- Chambers, F. (1980). A Re-Evaluation of Needs Analysis in ESP. *The ESP Journal*, 1(1), 25-33. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0272-2380\(80\)90007-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0272-2380(80)90007-4)
- Chia, H.U., Johnson, R., Chia, H.L. & Olive, F. (1999). English for college students in Taiwan: A study of perceptions of English needs in a medical context. *English for Specific Purposes*, 18(2), 107-119. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(97\)00052-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(97)00052-5)



- Council of Europe (2018). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). <https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989>
- Dudley-Evans, T. & St John, M. (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ferris, D. (1998). Students' Views of Academic Aural/Oral Skills: A Comparative Needs Analysis. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(2), 289-318. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587585>
- Gu, H., Bo, H. & Ren, L. (2019). Developing ESP Teaching Materials Based on the Analysis of Information Engineering Majors' Needs. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 7, 121-131. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2019.710011>
- Gundasheva, Zh. Spasova, L., Dvorska, O., Petrillova, M. (2016). Designing an innovative EAP/ESPP course for students of veterinary medicine based on a comparative needs analysis survey. *Pedagogicheski forum*, 4 [Pedagogical Forum]. 54-63 <https://doi.org/10.15547/PF.2015.066>
- Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A. (1987). *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning Centred Approach*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511733031>
- Ibrahim, H. H. (2020). Needs Analysis as a Prerequisite for Designing an ESP Course for Medical Students. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 10, 83-103. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojml.2020.102006>
- Kim, S. (2006). Academic oral communication needs of East Asian international graduate students in non-science and non-engineering fields. *English for Specific Purposes*, 25(4), 479-489. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2005.10.001>
- Lee, C-L. (2016). Principles and practices of ESP course design - a case study of a university of science and technology. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 15 (2), 94-105. <https://www.ijlter.org/index.php/ijlter/article/view/564/266>
- Li So-mui, F. & Mead, K. (2000). An analysis of English in the workplace: the communication needs of textile and clothing merchandisers. *English for Specific Purposes*, 19, 351-368. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(99\)00011-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(99)00011-3)
- Liu, D. Y., & Zhang, P. (2020). A Needs Analysis Proposal for ESP: A Case Study of a Short English Training Course for Bank Tellers in a Chinese Bank. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 8, 206-217. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2020.87017>
- Mian, M. & Sarwar, M. (2016). Needs analysis of English for specific purposes for receptionists working in private-sector hospitals of Lahore (Pakistan). *Science International (Lahore)*, 28(4), 741-746. <http://www.scint.com/pdf/636380778179864615.pdf>

Munby, J. (1978). *Communicative Syllabus Design: A Sociolinguistic Model for Defining the Content of Purpose-Specific Language Programmes*. Cambridge University Press.

Sakr, A. (2001). English for textile and clothing industry. Paper presented at TESOL Convention. St. Louis.

Stefanova, A. (2021). *Motivating students for greater engagement in ESP acquisition*. UNWE Publishing Complex.

West, R. (1997). Needs Analysis: A State of the Art. In R. Howard & G. Brown (Eds.), *Teacher education for LSP*, (pp. 24-95). Multilingual Matters.