

LANGUAGE COMPETENCES AMIDST CORPORATIZATION, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, AND LEARNING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

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Abstract: *This paper looks at the tripartite problematic perspective in current English for Specific Purposes educational practices in order to direct educational practices toward the progressive approaches and improvement in the area of language competences. One aspect of the thematic framework concerns the problem of the varieties of English in the light of the question of the norm. The other is related to the problem of corporatization of education. The third perspective focuses on digital technologies in a globalized world, as well as their role in and impact on education. The empirical part of the research was conducted in the form of a survey in which students answered questions about these thematic clusters. The research indicated the justifiability of the conceptual framework of the paper. It also revealed the angles from which the initial concerns could be questioned. The insights may open up an avenue for future tendencies in the syllabus design and classroom activities within English for Specific Purposes. Based on them, the authors recommend a balanced approach to nonstandard variants of English in ESP; an awareness and application of the benefits of both technology and in-person, face-to-face communication; a motivation for learning English that transcends sheer concern for profit.*

Keywords: *language competences, ESP, education, technology, corporatization*

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Article history: Received: 31 January 2022; Reviewed: 15 March 2022; Revised: 16 March 2022; Accepted: 17 March 2022; Published: April 2022



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Citation (APA): Stefanovic, T., Kazanegra-Velickovic, A., & Nikolic, N. (2022). Language Competences amidst Corporatization, Digital Technologies, and Learning English for Specific Purposes. *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT*, 10(1), 62-81. <https://doi.org/10.46687/XKOM9595>.

Introduction

There has been a growing need for learning language for vocationally defined purposes that implies acquiring language competences that would meet the standards set by the profession or the particular position. Although teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) differs from teaching general English, the former inevitably incorporates certain aspects of the latter. Taking into account both the common ground and differences between a foreign language for general purposes and a foreign language for specific purposes, the article examines a theoretical basis with a reference to different methods and approaches to learning and teaching a foreign language. In addition, based on the findings of the empirical part of the research, this paper offers an insight into the way in which the four language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) can be perceived, taught, practiced, learned, and advanced. Due to the limits set by the scope of a journal article, this aspect has not been extensively examined and presented. However, it might be included in the follow up stages of the research.

The aim of this paper is to present the challenges of teaching English for Specific Purposes at the time when globalized corporate demands impose efficiency, speed, and utility as the dominant coordinates in communication. This tendency may pose a threat that could limit the perception and use of language to its minimum threshold ensuring basic linguistic interaction. As a result, it might undermine the potential that language and language learning offer. This potential is often obscured by mechanistic functionality, yet it is key to human communication. Thus contextualized, the article looks at educational practices regarding both teaching and learning English for Specific Purposes, particularly focusing on vocational higher education classroom. It explores the language skills and tracks the possibilities of ensuring an inspiring educational content resonating with the specificities of this segment of English teaching and learning. While recognizing the current conditions, the paper also proposes a platform that might advance both teaching and learning English for Specific Purposes. In addition, it addresses the problem of and sketches the solution to the threat of the growing tendencies toward directive, automated, and radically pragmatic approaches to language.

In a globalized corporate world, to a high degree integrating digital technologies, language still operates as the key component of communication. Due to pervasive commoditization, communication is conditioned by the specificities of business interaction which is by definition utility governed. Hence, the use of language and its manifestations are adjusted to the imperatives of the corporate sphere which demands brevity, usefulness, and a pragmatic approach to communication means. Coupled with a highly mechanistic perception of language for technology-oriented purposes, this aspect tends to result in a

modified understanding and application of language. More precisely, the use of language leans toward a means of ensuring the necessary basis for basic linguistic exchange. This, in many instances, entails excluding the aspects that make language an inspiring playfield anchoring a thriving human community. Such a state of affairs affects educational practices. It also has a considerable impact on speakers' general approach to language. It fashions students' approach to learning in the way that prioritizes goal-oriented communication, while underrating the learning process that includes a more complex, comprehensive – perhaps even more demanding, yet certainly rewarding – endeavor. Ongoing globalization and demographic reconfigurations are continually shaping and reshaping the approaches to the curriculum. Language courses are heavily influenced by those trends. They strive to accommodate the needs and meet the requirements imposed by the dynamic structure of business environment. This frequently effects linguistic practices being adjusted to the utility governed imperatives of the corporate world. As such, they are practiced in accordance with the dominant determinants of business relations such as functionality and effectiveness. This in many instances results in a more narrowly defined target of communication – delivering a basic message. It also entails interventions in a linguistic form and challenges the boundaries of linguistic standards.

At the same time, in order for a future professional to establish a solid basis for their business activities and a successful career, they need to ensure communication means that enable prosperous business communication. Hence, language competencies play a central role in the field of learning a language. It is essential for a successful participation in the world of business. It also makes it possible for novice and seasoned players alike to respond to the challenges of the game based on competitiveness, efficiency, and utility. These aspects are supported by the use of digital technologies in email communication, advertising products on the Internet, online trading, online stores, websites, and digital business platforms. English operates as a lingua franca both in the context of globalized business and digital technologies. Therefore, English language competences are crucial for a functional contribution to those flows. The development in the realms of technology and science spurs the motivation for learning the English language. This is reflected in the teaching-learning practices at higher education institutions providing necessary knowledge and skills used in diverse communicational contexts.

Challenges in the Field of ESP: Englishes and Globalized Technologies

There has been a language related dilemma in the English-speaking world that concerns the implementation, acknowledgment, and the use of nonstandard variants of English. It reflects some of the key issues pertinent to pluralist

discourse. As such, it is closely related to the question of equality, discrimination, and social justice. More specifically, the fact that there are numerous variations of the English language has become a prominent component in shaping social and cultural relations in the English-speaking environment. It has been emphasized that the principle of social inclusion implies acknowledging diversity by making the variants more visible and allowing their participation in public discourse on a par with standard English.

Not only does it concern the right of an individual to speak their native dialects, idiolects, or sociolects, but also the inclusion of these varieties in the particular segments of social and cultural functioning. While embracing the significance of social inclusion, equality, and justice, a question emerges with regard to the norm that ascribes to certain variants a privileged position. Democratic principles demand equal rights in terms of cultural diversity. Language is a major component in that segment. Hence, the varieties of Englishes should be considered as valid as the standard variant. This poses the question of the curriculum, as the varieties are already part of the educational practices in some parts of the world, such as Indonesia, as discussed in Muhalim (2016) presenting the research and the results of the survey in which students' responses to the questionnaire demonstrate their awareness of World Englishes (WEs) and willingness to adopt their instances mostly for professional reasons (*ibid*, p. 29). It is worth noting that the state of affairs raises the issue of a sense of direction in English courses, especially in teaching and learning ESP. The reason for this is that the very concept of variety is questioned. It is regarded as potentially discriminating, i.e., implying the privileged status of the standard, as suggested by Levisen et al. (2017). Alternatively, it may be perceived as indicative of a patronizing attitude (*ibid*, p. 348).

From discourse analysis point of view, the question of equality resonates with the problem of "teacher-talk" in the classroom, as opposed to the linguistic context in which the parties are participating in the exchange as equals. McCarthy (1991) emphasizes that teacher talk is pertinent to educational practices by definition, since the teacher is the one who provides information (*ibid*, p.18). Practicing language content that concerns real situations brings the language closer to the students and allows them to contribute to the communication as active sources of information. Similarly, instead of merely perceiving the assigned standard form of language, speakers can contribute their own linguistic capital in the form of the language actually spoken in certain cultural or social contexts. Cultural and educational aspects meet in the point Tannen (2007) makes about the role of imitation in conversation. Exploring the phenomenon, it is emphasized that the importance imitation has in the learning context originates in the human tendency to lean toward the familiar, and imitation is based on repetition, hence ensures a sense of certainty and comfort, "the pleasure associated with the familiar" (*ibid*, p .98).

In addition to ethnic and/or racial bases, inequality manifested in linguistic situations is also class related, as pointed out in the historical overview of the development of linguistics and the pioneering work of the Linguistic Society of America presented in Hymes (2003). It reveals that the organization in many instances used unorthodox approaches aiming to free studying a language and language itself from any stereotypical confines. Interestingly, it is noted that even the very notion of correctness is discussed through the prism of the relational nature of language: “It was clear that many notions of correctness had grown up, even been invented, in the course of instructing an aspiring middle class in verbal manners. Seen against the history of the language, and beside other languages, many preferences of pronunciation, or construction, were arbitrary” (ibid, p. 208).

ESP curriculum design and educational practices have not only been challenged due to the previously presented socio-cultural-linguistic issues, but also because of the very structure of English education, where the boundaries and inevitable intersections between ESP and general English play an important role, as examined in Kitkauskienė (2006). Brunton (2009) notes that the range of the definitions of ESP and indeed the specificities of the term in particular are not fixed categories. This resonates with the topics examined in Far (2008). Therefore, teaching and learning ESP should be approached from a variety of perspectives and/or as a hybrid phenomenon demanding a corresponding methodology.

The need also emerges from some cases where crossing the boundaries set by the normativity of the standard language variant may occur as a result of using English structures adjusted to the L1 variants, as noted in McCarthy and Carter (2014), tracking the findings in Malay speakers producing written English text, where the referential relationship between the noun phrase and the pronoun does not parallel the dynamics found in English (ibid, p. 91). The interference of the first language is explored through the question of the target culture in Bouherar (2017), specifically looking at teaching-learning idioms in the Arabic context (ibid, p. 946). Even an extended use of L1 can be part of the learning process, as the study looking at Turkish airspak students shows in Sullivan and Girginer (2002). Negotiating some grammatical issues is part of this conundrum, as remarked in Baxter and Holland (2007).

However, there is an angle from which adjustments in English structures are motivated differently. For example, in order to perform a financial transaction, trading operations, or to negotiate the price of a product, it is not necessary to insist on grammatically correct forms, stylistically sophisticated expressions, or semantically precise options. This is evident from Tamaredo (2018, p. 90), who states that “[c]ommunication is considered to be efficient when the message conveyed by the speaker is transmitted to the addressee with structures that are

easy to process, allowing fast information transmission". In addition, in 2013 Huhta et al. pointed out the risks of reductionist approach to language learning in ESP (*ibid*, p.34).

In "No, it is not elitist to correct students' spelling," Furedi (2021) observes an increasing demand in the UK educational context for a sensitive approach to students' tests and papers featuring grammar and spelling mistakes. Namely, it is assumed that language related errors occur more in the papers of the students who come either from nonnative English-speaking background, lower classes, or minority communities. It has been suggested that one should take into account the impact of the background on students' language competences and that those papers should be graded accordingly. The failure to do so may be considered as a manifestation of racism, class bias, or ethnicity-based discrimination. It should be noted that democratic principles and implementation of the politics of inclusion are key to prosperous social functioning that integrates pluralist public discourse. A particularly careful approach is needed to sustain it. This resonates with the points made in the article. While it addresses the problem of students' papers in sociology and history courses, the phenomenon indirectly communicates the potential conundrum that an ESP classroom may encounter. Namely, the question is how to sustain a balanced approach to the acknowledgment, implementation, and use of English varieties in the context where a high level of formality is required. This particularly concerns the use of idiolects and sociolects that have become integral components in high-speed text messaging, exchange on social media, and email communication. This includes the use of abbreviated, contracted, or modified forms of words, absence of the tense or person markers in verbs, inaccurate forms of participles and plural forms of nouns. Given the global character of corporate interaction, the presence of a diversified English in business communication may be confusing, since there are morphological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic differences, discrepancies, and divergences between and among Englishes.

For that reason, the strategy suggested at US schools with regard to Black English vernacular might be helpful. Particularly, as Wangberg (1982) points out, it has been insisted that teachers should sustain awareness of the differences and even obtain training that would equip them with linguistic tools necessary for comprehending the coded sociolect (*ibid*, p. 305). Although the observations in the article pertain to American high schools, the approach as such does resonate with the needs encountered at higher education institutions. The intricacies of the Algerian cultural context explored in Bouherar (2021) indicate kindred nondiscriminatory, notably anti-imperialist streak, and the need to accommodate to the voices of the dispossessed (*ibid*, p. 3). Similarly, in the world of business, that kind of awareness may reduce confusion and prevent miscommunication.

The situation featuring both the potential and threats generates uncertainty. What should be taken as a point of reference with regard to language competences in a globalized, corporatized world where the principles of ruthless utilitarianism may destabilize the boundaries of an acceptable level of language accuracy, playfulness, and consistency under the threat of basic communication and the content stripped of subtlety? How can we sustain the belief in the possibility of learning as a highly rewarding endeavor when it is obscured either by profit making desensitized to impractical, superfluous “trivialities” or by conflicting voices in the public debate? How can we sustain vibrant educational practices in the shadow of the tension between free speech and political correctness, plurality of voices and censorship, playfulness and mechanistic/ mechanized linguistic conduct?

The advent of digital technologies enabled thinking human communication as an extended activity that reaches beyond the boundaries imposed by physical space. It also brought about the idea of a free net hosting collaborative interaction. It promised to span the areas on the planet that separated its inhabitants and to ensure global interconnectivity unifying the participants in virtual intercultural exchange. The potential for a wider array of educational content, access to a variety of materials, and the possibility of choice were among the gifts the new dawn was announcing.

Nowadays, in the digital realm where everyone is a native and an alien at the same time, a tiny portion of the big dream is the reality of our encounters with technology. For one, the net is not free. It has been corporatized and transformed into an endlessly monetizable and monetizing source. Further, it has become heavily censored under the flag of political correctness, anti-hate speech policies, protection of human rights, and equality. In order to ensure social justice, it has become a fairly anti-democratic vehicle of social functioning. The world wide web might have lived up to the promise to ensure global connectivity, yet it seems that alongside the shrinking of the distance separating people, it also eradicated our sense of space, distance, and boundaries as such. It created a false, technology enhanced presence. It has connected cultures, yet it dissolved the possibility to sustain critical distance in an encounter with digital content. It has enabled a diversity of communication modes, choices, and educational resources, but also brought about information overload and pervasive language of instructions and directives. The net has become rather regulated, and it has had an impact on playfulness, spontaneity, and exploration in all spheres of life, language included. The freedom of the free net has become further threatened during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic-imposed restrictions which effected online communication, business, and education as a mandatory mode in many cases.

What does it mean for ESP educators and learners? Both categories certainly benefit tremendously from the potential that the virtual realm offers. Learners are provided with the opportunity to be exposed to varieties of the English language and to encounter them in an authentic context. Additionally, they are able to choose educational content from online courses, podcasts, lectures, talks, one-on-one classes, e-books, audiobooks, popular culture, the entertainment industry, and social media. Constantinou and Papadima-Sophocleous (2020) accentuate that these online sources are mirrored in the materials used in an offline digital environment in the classroom. Students participate in technology enabled communication using a new language generated through the interaction via different platforms available on the internet and offline alike. García Sánchez (2015) shows that ESP learners are capable of managing hybrid sources such as the materials used in both m-learning and u-learning¹. These aspects may be beneficial in the context of certain teaching methodologies. This opinion is forged in Mulyadi et al. (2020), insisting on interactive tasks and students' active participation.

There have been numerous ways in which technology has impacted communication, social relations, and education. We bear witness to both benefits and hindrances. Text messages have impacted shrinking of the verbal expression literally, while digital technologies have by and large metaphorically shrunk the spaces between people. This distinction and many others based on the same principle of the distinction between the literal and the symbolic, physical and virtual, simulated and authentic have been massively ignored. So has the fact that technology is supposed to be in the service of human beings, not vice versa. This affects one's sense of the interlocutor, messages delivered within technology enabled communication, and the perception of the communicational content. One wonders if we can sustain the passion for teaching and learning that would be immune to the deviations of the original idea of the net, connectivity, and bridging the gap between oneself and the other? Are we able to keep the belief in vibrant, inspiring, and playful educational practices? Can we preserve the awareness of the joy that learning, teaching, and using a language may engender?

The supposedly free net is not the only aspect of social functioning that has been reconfigured under the pervasive expansion of consumerism in the modern world. Education has been affected, as well. There has been a rise of privately owned higher education institutions worldwide and tuition fees that exceed students' and student families' economic capacities. Higher demand for the labor force with higher education degrees has had two major consequences.

1. M-learning or mobile learning is a new way of accessing learning context using personal electronic devices, whereas u-learning or ubiquitous learning refers to any environment that allows access to learning anywhere and anytime (a.n.).

One is financial dependency of students and their families on loans and other debt based economic transactions. The other regards hyperproduction of higher education degrees.

Globalized digital technologies offer online courses, talks, and lectures that provide us with insights into economic currents. We can obtain financial literacy and perhaps become capable of managing the increasingly complex side of both private lives and social relations. This may also become the dominant lens through which we perceive the world. Education might be among the things that are observed through such a prism. Students have become customers. Colleges have become corporations that offer services facilitated by instructors. Their philosophies are to a great extent conditioned by the vision of shareholders. The vision is governed by the fluctuations on the market, and educational practices are adjusted to the demands that the financial elites impose. It seems that for the students who major in finance, business, and related disciplines and fields, this might be an advantage. The fact that the market driven functioning of the society is a global phenomenon makes the situation even more advantageous. Most of the world speaks the same language, as it were. Moreover, it is frequently manifested in the linguistic content articulated in English. In that context, Van der Yeught (2016) indicates that the significance of English based imports can hardly be overrated.

Hence, those who study business or learn about business can get easily equipped with the tools needed for business communication and for practicing the particular business. Technology and globalization make it both necessary and possible to adopt that equipment from experts, native and non-native speakers alike. This can be inferred from Tica, Palurović, and Firat (2017) paying particular attention to EIL (English as an International Language) in an educational context (*ibid*, p. 484). Students can be exposed to diverse, yet authentic language materials and business contexts. It can hugely inform their language competences. This reverberates with the findings presented in Ahmadvand, Barati, and Ketabi (2013). The study makes a point about different needs including professional, but also other types of needs reflecting a wider range of motivation and perception of language (*ibid*, p. 2). This is also explored in Koran (2014) from the perspective of syllabus design. Globalization has brought about listening to authentic business dialogs, reading reports, analyses, and critiques, engaging in an active conversation with peers, instructors, and business partners. The globalized communication channel has enabled learners to contribute their own writings to both academic and corporate communities in the form of academic papers, reports, financial analyses, books, and business plans. Learners can learn, prosper, and share. Formats vary and can include cooperation with instructors (Luka, 2008).

This poses certain challenges to both educators and learners and confronts them with new demands and a need to acquire technology related skills and literacies, as suggested in Mudure-Jacob (2019). The benefits of ESP in that context are suggested in Ukaegbu, Njoku, and Amadi (2020), emphasizing the socio-economic aspect in the poverty and unemployment-stricken areas such as Nigeria, where entrepreneurial enterprises are largely enabled by the use of the English language, particularly in the field of marketing and advertising (ibid, p. 300). The situation informs the approaches both within and without the educational institutions in different ways. One of them implies that customers are entitled to receive the service the university offers. The university, both as an employer and service, is defined by its business philosophy. It is obligated to deliver the product in accordance with its business profile. Transmission and exchange of knowledge between instructors and students, as well as within their respective peer communities, is to a considerable degree a matter of financial transactions, profit making, and reducing costs. These aspects, notably from the perspective of the employer/business owner, are critically approached in Ramos (2019), stressing the threats that commoditization of education entails, but also raising the question of the role of the state in intermediating between the private education sector and clients (ibid, pp. 35, 37, 40).

This may affect the positioning of these parties in an opposing, potentially conflicting relationship. In addition, it creates the cultural climate based on competition, rivalry, retributive tribalism, individualism, and detachment from both peers and teachers when it comes to students, and coworkers and students in the case of educators. In other words, conveying and receiving knowledge at the institution of higher education has massively become subordinated to the financial dogma of today's society, and bereft of the sense of community, collaboration, and trust. The question is, however, whether we can reconfigure the stray currents in educational practices, while simultaneously sustaining the vitality of educational exchange based on genuine interest, commitment, inquisitiveness, and intellectual engagement. Interestingly, the very globalized world is in a certain sense both informed and enabled by means of interconnectivity and might offer a platform for an optimistic scenario, as it can be inferred from Kopylovskaya and Bajeva (2017), highlighting the situation where the traditional divide between technology and hard science, on the one hand, and the humanities, on the other, is being overcome by means of global communication and advanced technologies (ibid, p. 590). Similarly, Živković (2016) speaks in the key of hopeful prospects that globalized, technology enhanced communication may ensure. Emphasizing the challenges the context brings, the article capitalizes on the importance and possibility of communication based on democratic principles and freedom from mechanistic confines.

Materials and methods

The question of language competences was also investigated through the empirical portion of the research. It consisted of a survey featuring the answers of 52 first year students at Belgrade Business and Arts Academy of Applied Studies. One cluster of questions concerned the approaches to Englishes, sociolects, idiolects, styles, and language skills as part of the educational practices in ESP. In addition, students were asked about their perception of the role of technology and its impact on educational practices. In that context, its efficiency/ effectiveness was contrasted with in-person/ face-to-face communication. The questionnaire offered the students the opportunity to voice their opinions by addressing the question of their motivation for learning English. Their choices, such as professional goals, were combined and juxtaposed with aspirations toward an integration into the cosmopolitan community. The survey was conducted in May 2021 by the authors who are also instructors at this institution of higher education. The participants were native speakers of Serbian language who were learning English as a foreign language. Male participants constituted 32.2%, and females 67.8% out of the total number. There were 60.7% of the students whose major was in finance, accountancy, and banking, and 39.3% of those who studied taxes and customs. 65.5% of them have been learning English since third grade of elementary school, 11.7% since fifth grade, 1.6 % since first grade of high school, 0.1% since first year of college, and 21.0% chose „other.“ In respect to proficiency, only 7.2% out of the total number of participants were A level English speakers, 67.3% had a B level, and 25.5% a C level knowledge of English.

The methods included experimental measurements and statistical analysis of the results. The instrument used in the empirical part was the structured survey targeting the thematic areas of relevance. It was composed specifically for the purpose of this research. The quantitative analysis of the results performed using a statistical method has also been qualitatively analyzed. The insights resulting from that part, alongside the particular commentaries and ideas related to the thematic area, are presented in the next section of this paper. The approach relies on discourse analysis as a research method which aims to understand how language is used in real life situations, as it is suggested in Marra (2014), insisting on the skills pertinent to discourse analysis and sociolinguistic aspects of language in a work related context. Some aspects of the analysis verge on the interdisciplinary perspective, as certain cultural, social, and political aspects have been taken into account in accordance with Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000), looking at three aspects of discourse – as text, discursive practice, and social practice (ibid, pp. 448-449).

Results and Discussions

As it was shown in the previous sections, the question of the varieties of Englishes and their presence in academic context became one of the key areas in the realm of ESP. It has caused numerous dilemmas from the perspective of instructors, syllabus and curriculum design, and students, i.e., from both teaching and learning angles. The survey showed that the questions framed in the theoretical part were relevant and that they brought to awareness key democratic principles and human rights. It also confirmed the anticipated uncertainties with respect to possible problems and benefits that the introduction of the varieties of English in the courses could entail.

Somewhat surprisingly, yet hopefully, students did not experience major hindrances in the encounters with nonstandard variants of English (86,9 %), as shown in Table 1 providing the data about the answers to the question:

Do you experience difficulty when you are exposed to nonstandard varieties of the English language (dialects, slang, colloquial language)?

Table 1.
Difficulties with varieties

	<i>Percentage</i>
Not at all	4,2
A little	86,9
Quite	4,3
To a great extent	4,6

It was very important to track the dynamic within the survey that regarded students' approach to the connection between learning and certain language skills, as elucidated in the thematic focus of the paper revolving around language competences. The students insisted that for the improvement of their speaking skills, the importance of practicing conversation with the instructor by far outweighed the significance of other components (67.3%), as shown in Table 2 providing the data about the responses to the statement:

I regard the following type of practice to be beneficial for the advancement of my speech:

Table 2.
Type of practice which is beneficial for the advancement of speech

	<i>Percentage</i>
Conversation with the instructor	67,3
Conversation with peers	0,0

	<i>Percentage</i>
Conversation with native English speakers	15,3
Using audio-visual content (video, series, movies, music, etc.)	17,3
Other	0,1

Coupled with their emphasizing the role of speech in communication by and large and also as a learning component (93.2%), this might have addressed the approach and need based on the primacy of in-person, face-to-face communication. It could be informative of strategizing educational and, more broadly, socially conditioned linguistic realities in the time of advanced technologies and virtual educational practices, business, and human interaction. This can be tracked in Table 3 providing the data about the answers to the question:

Which language skill do you consider to be the most important?

Table 3.

The most important language skill

	<i>Percentage</i>
Speech	93,2
Reading	1,4
Writing	0,0
Listening	5,4

This might be taken as a signpost in structuring course materials and accommodating the needs hereby expressed. One should be mindful of the fact that surfaced in the empirical portion of this research, which indicated students' approach to grammar as the key linguistic ingredient in communication (45.7%). This is shown in Table 4 offering the information about the responses to the statement:

In ESP, I most often encounter problems in the following areas:

Table 4.

Problematic areas in ESP

	<i>Percentage</i>
Grammar	45,7
Vocabulary building	32,5
Oral expression	18,1
Written expression	0,1
Listening and understanding	2,2
Reading and understanding	1,4

In fact, many of the students were of the opinion that linguistically incorrect structures had a negative impact on the perception of the content (56.6%), as shown in Table 5 providing the data about the answers to the question:

Do grammatically incorrect structures impede understanding language content within ESP?

Table 5.

Grammatically incorrect structures impede understanding language content within ESP

	<i>Percentage</i>
True	56,6
Partly true	26,9
Not true	16,5

In addition, most of the participants spoke in favor of a formal mode of expression (52.2%). Table 6 offers the information about the answers to the question:

Is a formal expressive mode in ESP easier to understand than colloquial?

Table 6.

Formal expressive mode in ESP is easier to understand than colloquial

	<i>Percentage</i>
True	52,2
Partly true	47,7
Not true	0,1

Comparing the accessibility and comprehensibility of the content delivered within vocational educational practices ranging from formal, academic, colloquial, slang, to regional dialects, the students opted for the formal mode (51.6%), whereas the other choices were selected by 16.3%, 15.6%, 16.4%, and 0.1%, respectively, as displayed in Table 7 providing the data about the answers to the question:

What types of content within ESP are easier to understand?

Table 7.*Types of content within ESP which are easier to understand*

	<i>Percentage</i>
Formal	51,6
Academic	16,3
Colloquial	15,6
Slang	16,4
Regional	0,1

They also prioritized communication with native speakers, particularly those using the standard variant (93.4%), as Table 8 shows providing the data about the answers to the question:

Is it easier to understand native speakers who use the standard variant of English?

Table 8.

Native speakers who use the standard variant of English are easier to understand

	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	93,4
No	0,0
To a certain degree	6,6

The survey addressed the concern about the dominant cultural paradigm dictating economic power as a token of individual and social worth. It targeted the problem of utility as the key motivation for learning English, as it could show the relationship between education, on the one hand, and, on the other, profit and wealth as social status markers. The results of the survey signaled a hopeful prospect based on students' responses about their major motivation being the need to become cosmopolitan citizens of the world, not greedy rivals competing in the corporate arena (54.4%), as shown in Table 9 offering the data about the way the participants provided the information about the motivation for learning English by completing the sentence fragment/prompt:

I am learning English because:

Table 9.*Motivation for learning English*

	<i>Percentage</i>
It makes me a more productive worker	43,2
It enables a cosmopolitan approach to communication and people	54,4
A lot of people speak English, and I don't want to be an exception	2,2
Other	0,2

The question of the prevalence of digital technologies in education was reflected in the responses of the students to the question in the survey where the majority stressed the need for in-person, face-to-face communication as opposed to the technology enabled communication channel (97.1%), as shown in Table 10 providing the data about the responses to the statement:

I regard in-person, face-to-face communication to be more important in ESP than the use of digital technology.

Table 10.*Face-to-face communication is more important in ESP than digital technology*

	<i>Percentage</i>
True	97,1
Partly true	2,9
Not true	0,0

However, the primacy of face-to-face communication in education did not affect students' awareness of the importance of digital technology in that context. This was clearly evident from their responses to the question about the importance of digital technology in the educational environment, where the students expressed their opinions on the assumption about there being more advantages than disadvantages of the use of technology for education related purposes (59.3%), while only 2.1% of the participants in the survey thought that there were more disadvantages. 38.6% of them contended that there was an equal number of advantages and disadvantages. Table 11 provides the data about the responses to the question:

Is considerable presence of digital technologies in ESP more advantageous or more disadvantageous?

Table 11.*Digital technologies in ESP*

	<i>Percentage</i>
More advantageous	59,3
More disadvantageous	2,1
Equally advantageous and disadvantageous	38,6

Based on the results of the empirical part, and relying on the considerations presented in the theoretical part, the authors recommend a balanced approach to the introduction of WEs and forms of nonstandard English in the ESP curriculum; raising consciousness about the benefits of both technology and in-person, face-to-face communication, and their application in accordance with the insights; diversified motivation for learning English highlighting the aspects that might be obscured by profit driven goals.

Conclusion

Some of the challenges with which ESP educational practices are confronted include the presence and practice of Englishes as an official part of the curriculum; corporatization of education; and the globalized realm of advanced technologies. These three areas have been explored in this research theoretically and empirically, as presented in the paper. Regarding the first issue, the main anxieties revolved around the students' perception of and ability to manage varieties of English. The empirical component of the research partly confirmed this, but it also confronted some of the postulates by showing that students expressed both willingness and ability to cope with the challenge. As far as the problem of corporatized education is concerned, the responses within the survey indicated that despite the prevalent commoditization, students were sensitized to other motivations. The third issue looking at the globalized realm of digital technology, especially its role and impact in education, showed that students recognized its significance, but sought other modes of communication and expression, particularly emphasizing the relevance of in-person, face-to-face communication both with peers and instructors. The findings consolidated some of the initial concerns, yet brought an optimistic perspective grounded in the students' openness to otherness, learning, and exploration. They were a basis for the recommendation made by the authors. It includes a balanced approach to nonstandard variants of English in ESP; insights into and application of the benefits of both technology and in-person, face-to-face communication; motivation for learning English that surpasses merely profit driven goals. This could be informative of the syllabus design and classroom activities within

the ESP educational activities that would ensure the advancement of students' language competences.

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