

Implementing ESP in Moroccan Engineering Schools: Challenges and Solutions

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Abstract: *As Morocco strives to align its education system with global standards and demands, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has emerged as a crucial factor, particularly in technical and professional fields. However, the effective implementation of ESP faces many obstacles throughout several engineering schools nationwide. This paper explores the challenges faced in implementing and advancing ESP programs in Morocco, focusing on the case of the Institut National des Postes et Télécommunications (INPT). The article's main goal is to provide a preliminary assessment of the ESP landscape in Morocco and propose strategies for improvement. While empirical data is crucial for validating these strategies, this article serves as the ground for a foundational discussion of the current situation of ESP in Morocco as a preliminary phase for further empirical research. The aim of discussing this issue is to provide insights into the broader challenges and opportunities for advancing ESP programs in tertiary education institutions in Morocco. Thus, the paper will discuss the specific context of INPT as an example, highlighting the needs of its students and the challenges they face in acquiring the specialized English language skills they need. This will contribute to a more informed approach to the teaching of ESP, ensuring that Moroccan graduates are equipped with the necessary skills to compete in the global marketplace. Moreover, this paper emphasises that ESP instructors, equipped with a deep understanding of both student needs and current industry trends, play a critical role in tailoring course content to meet the specific language requirements of technical careers. This is achieved through the integration of case studies, simulations, and collaborative projects that require students to apply their language skills in authentic contexts. Such immersive experiences not only enhance students' communication skills but also build their confidence in using English within their technical domains.*

Keywords: *ESP; skills; technical English; proficiency; job market*

1. Introduction

There is a concerted effort to align Morocco's education system with global standards and demands. As the country aims for educational excellence and international competitiveness, one critical aspect that should gain prominence is English for Specific Purposes (ESP). ESP caters to the specialized language needs of learners in technical and professional fields. However, despite its importance, the effective implementation of ESP faces significant challenges throughout various engineering schools

across Morocco. Thus, this paper investigates these obstacles, focusing on the case of the *Institut National des Postes et Télécommunications* (INPT) to shed light on broader opportunities and strategies for advancing ESP programs in Morocco, ensuring that graduates are well-equipped to succeed in the global marketplace. The primary objective of this article is to assess the overall ESP landscape in Moroccan engineering schools, with a focus on identifying potential areas for improvement. While empirical data provides answers to specific questions, this paper identifies issues that need further empirical research and investigation.

2. ESP and students' future success

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) plays a vital role in equipping professionals with the language skills they need to thrive in technical and professional domains. One of the key strengths of ESP is its focus on tailored communication, which is crucial in technical fields. Despite the emphasis on English proficiency, many students fail to see the link between their English skills and future job success. This perception can lead them to view English classes as a burden rather than a valuable opportunity (Çelik et al., 2018, p. 245). Engineers, scientists, and other professionals need to master specialized vocabulary, jargon, and communication strategies to effectively convey complex ideas to colleagues and clients. However, while vocabulary is crucial in teaching ESP, the latter needs to be specifically aligned with real-world tasks. "In higher education, students require improved English skills to not only study their specialized discipline but also secure employment upon graduation" (Kırkgöz & Dikilitaş, 2018, p. 5). Thus, students learn to navigate industry-specific documentation, reports, and other relevant materials, giving them the ability to not only understand complex information but also produce clear and concise content within their field.

The focus on the relevance of ESP programs to learners' needs is crucial to future career advancement as employers increasingly seek candidates who can communicate fluently within their specific industry in a globalised world characterised by mobility. In occupational settings, most companies will offer their workers training opportunities that are not specifically limited to language training (Anthony, 2018, p. 36) but are more likely to be dispensed in English due to the diversity in employees' nationalities and backgrounds. Therefore, proficiency in ESP allows professionals to excel in a variety of situations, opening doors to exciting career opportunities. Moreover, globalization and mobility are other reasons why ESP is so valuable. As the world becomes more interconnected, professionals are increasingly called upon to work with colleagues across borders. Furthermore, the rise of English as a language of instruction in higher education, fuelled by its growing importance in research and the internationalization of universities, has led to a global phenomenon called 'English Medium Instruction' (EMI) (Çelik et al., 2018, p. 3). This adds more emphasis on the need to excel at English, especially ESP, for students to succeed in the present-day world.

Finally, ESP programs offer the benefit of efficient learning compared to traditional language programs. Unlike the latter, which covers a broad range of topics, ESP focuses on the specific needs of its learners. Tailoring content to students' professional goals helps ESP instructors ensure that their time is spent learning the language skills that will have the most immediate impact on their careers. In other words, ESP bridges the gap between language learning and practical application by providing targeted instruction and focusing on industry-specific skills.

3. Implementing ESP in Morocco

While ESP programs offer significant benefits, their implementation in Moroccan engineering schools, like the *Institut National des Postes et Télécommunications* (INPT), faces several challenges. A common criticism of ESP in higher education is the lack of proper planning and execution. Integrating ESP into

existing curricula can be complex and lead to disagreements about the best approach as “ESP focuses on when, where and why learners need the language either in study or workplace contexts” (Baştürkmen, 2015, p. 8). Moreover, English language pedagogy in Morocco, especially in higher education, presents unique challenges for ESP. This is related to the hard task of balancing the development of language proficiency with the teaching of specialized engineering content, which requires careful consideration and innovative methods.

Another challenge facing ESP in Morocco is that Moroccan tertiary education institutions lack dedicated ESP courses in their undergraduate and graduate programs. Even when English language courses are available for students in technical and engineering fields, they receive little or no importance. This uneven distribution of English language learning opportunities creates a significant gap between what is offered to the students, what they need, and what the academic and professional worlds require. Consequently, many students turn to private language centres for ESP courses, but these centres often only offer English for Business Purposes (EBP), limiting the range of specialized English skills students can develop (Biddou et al., 2019, p. 20).

Therefore, implementing ESP programs effectively requires taking into consideration several issues. Since language teaching is mainly about adapting to different situations, teachers need to consider the unique dynamics of their classrooms, current events, and larger changes in society and education, in addition to understanding the specific language needs and cultural backgrounds of their students (Rocha-Antonin, 2020, p. 13). A strong foundation begins with a thorough understanding of student needs. Conducting a specific needs assessment is crucial, which involves gathering information on students’ current language proficiency, career aspirations, and the technical communication challenges they are likely to face. Hence, identifying the gaps between existing language skills and industry expectations allows for a better understanding and conceptualization of the targeted program design.

One other major issue related to implementing ESP in Moroccan schools of engineering is that ESP often lacks a clearly defined role and guidelines within the national curriculum if there is one. This ambiguity can lead to inconsistent implementation among the various schools and discrepancies in valorising its importance. Similarly, formal recognition and validation of ESP courses by educational institutions and government bodies is crucial. This validation would ensure that students, employers, and institutions understand the value and the guidelines of ESP programs at a national level.



Figure 1. “The four pillars of ESP” (Anthony, 2018, p. 46)

Another challenge relates to resource constraints. Accessing up-to-date and relevant ESP materials specifically tailored to Moroccan contexts can be challenging as efforts to do this often face the fact that ESP materials are generally rare and limited. Besides, the international market for ESP coursebooks is limited and at the same time characterised by vast discrepancies among the coursebooks available. Moreover, finding qualified instructors with expertise in both language teaching methodologies and specialized technical domains is essential for effective ESP instruction. However, this combination of skills can be difficult to find. Additionally, resource constraints, including qualified instructors, up-to-date teaching materials, and access to relevant technology, can hinder the success of ESP programs. Similarly, ESP programs must continuously adapt to stay relevant to the latest industry trends and technological advancements.

At the level of curriculum design, balancing language and content is crucial to designing ESP curricula that effectively integrate language proficiency development and technical content knowledge, which presents a complex challenge. This can be achieved by finding a balance that equips students with both strong communication skills and a solid foundation in technical knowledge. A one-size-fits-all approach to ESP curriculum design fails to meet the diverse needs of learners across different technical fields. Therefore, effective ESP programs require tailoring and customizing content to address the specific needs of each learner group. Thus, bridging the gap between language proficiency and the practical skills required in the engineering workplace remains a constant challenge.

Concerning motivation, “Many factors can influence motivation, such as self-efficacy, self-determination and the whole teaching process” (Shao et al., 2020, p. 61). Content that directly connects to their professional goals ensures greater engagement and motivation. This is because students’ motivation in ESP programs is heavily influenced by the perceived relevance of the course content to their future careers. Therefore, striking a balance between intrinsic motivation, where students develop a genuine interest in learning English, and extrinsic factors such as grades or job

prospects is crucial for long-term success. Hence, some students are highly motivated by the clear relevance of the course content to their future careers, while others may be driven by external factors.

In terms of assessment challenges, developing appropriate assessments that accurately measure both students' language skills and their domain-specific knowledge is a significant challenge. ESP assessments need to go beyond just language proficiency to ensure students are acquiring the necessary technical vocabulary and communication skills. Similarly, effective assessment must be both valid, meaning it accurately measures what it is intended to measure, and reliable, meaning it consistently yields similar results when administered repeatedly.

ESP courses should also cater for the needs of the industry to equip graduates with the requisite capabilities to thrive in the professional landscape. Thus, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs must undergo a process of continuous alignment with the evolving demands and expectations of industry stakeholders, particularly regarding technical communication skills. This necessitates the establishment of robust and ongoing communication channels with industry professionals. Such collaborative efforts serve two purposes. First, they enable ESP programs to maintain a pulse on the most recent industry trends, including the specific technical communication skills deemed essential for employability. Second, this collaboration creates a dynamic feedback loop, allowing ESP programs to strategically update their curriculum to reflect the ever-changing industry requirements. In this way, ESP programs can ensure graduates possess the targeted technical communication skills necessary to seamlessly integrate into the workplace and prepare for future career challenges.

Another key issue that needs to be handled is the issue of research and collaboration. More research is needed to understand the effectiveness of different ESP program models and teaching methodologies in Moroccan contexts. Data-driven insights can inform the continuous improvement of ESP programs. As for collaboration, strengthening partnerships between educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and policymakers can create a more supportive environment for ESP implementation. Collaborative efforts can address resource constraints, curriculum development, and assessment challenges.

Despite the challenges listed above, ESP courses have gained traction due to their perceived advantages over general English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) programs. Proponents argue that ESP ensures higher student motivation by tailoring content to their specific academic or professional fields. Learners are naturally more engaged with topics directly relevant to their studies or future careers, leading to enhanced learning outcomes compared to a broader ESL curriculum. Furthermore, ESP courses prioritize efficiency. Through needs analysis, ESP programs establish clear and focused learning objectives, resulting in a more targeted approach than general ESL. This focus on specific and achievable goals is believed to contribute to a higher rate of success in achieving desired learning outcomes (Baştürkmen, 2015, p. 11).

To address the challenges above, a multifaceted approach is needed. This includes curriculum design that emphasizes relevance, ongoing teacher development programs, and strong collaboration with industry partners. Understanding the specific context and the broader educational landscape in Morocco is decisive in improving the implementation of ESP programs and equipping Moroccan engineering graduates with the skills necessary to compete in the global market.

4. The context of INPT as a case study

The *Institut National des Postes et Télécommunications* (INPT) serves as a suitable case study within the broader landscape of ESP implementation in Morocco. This institute of engineering, specializing in

telecommunications and information technology, attracts students aiming for careers in communication networks, information technology, telecommunication systems, and related fields.

INPT recognizes the critical role of ESP in its students' success; however, implementing effective ESP programs presents a unique set of challenges. While general English proficiency is important, INPT students require a deeper understanding of domain-specific vocabulary, communication strategies, and technical writing skills to succeed in their chosen fields. The gap between their existing language abilities and the demands of their future careers necessitates a focused and targeted approach to ESP instruction.

Currently, the INPT is host to seven courses of study: Cybersecurity and Digital Trust, Embedded Systems and Digital Services, Advanced Software Engineering for Digital Services, Distributed Ubiquitous Systems-Cloud & IoT, SMART ICT, Data Sciences, and Innovation & AMOA (Project Management Support) (Figure 2), in addition to two master's programs and a doctoral school. Each of these programs would, theoretically, require a tailored ESP program to meet the specific needs of the learners. However, such an endeavour remains unfeasible due to the challenges discussed in this paper.

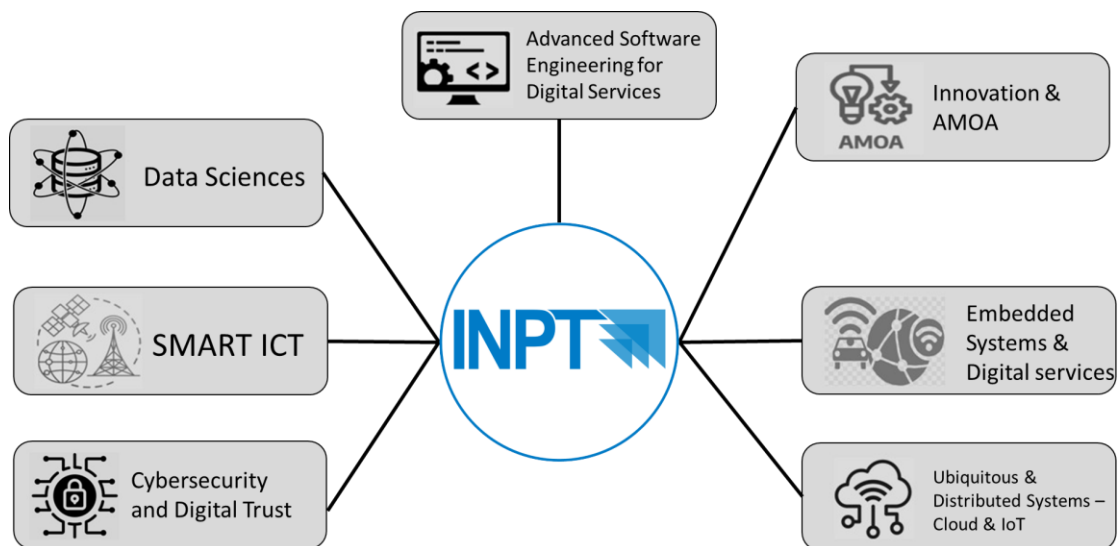


Figure 2. Course tracks available at INPT

In such a diverse and rich environment of study, integrating ESP seamlessly into the existing curriculum at INPT can be complex. First, balancing technical content with language learning objectives requires careful consideration. Furthermore, ensuring instructors possess the necessary expertise in both engineering concepts and language pedagogy is crucial and it poses a serious challenge to overcome. Additionally, motivating students to actively engage in ESP courses also presents a challenge. Creating relevant content and utilizing effective teaching methods are also a challenge as these are keys to keeping students engaged and invested in their ESP learning. These are fundamental elements since the ability to communicate effectively in English has a significant impact on the employability of INPT graduates who are preparing to enter a competitive job market with a global reach. Therefore, ESP programs at INPT need to align with industry requirements and prepare students for the realities of today's multinational workplaces.

4.1 Students needs regarding specialized English language skills

The *Institut National des Postes et Télécommunications* (INPT) equips students for promising careers in telecommunications and related fields. However, these students' success in their careers hinges on the development of specialized English language skills. INPT students need a robust vocabulary specific to their chosen domain. This includes terms related to telecommunications, networking, software development, and hardware design. Mastering this specialized terminology allows them to communicate effectively with colleagues and industry professionals. Beyond vocabulary, students must also develop professional communication skills tailored to their learning objectives. This encompasses writing clear and concise reports, participating confidently in meetings, and collaborating effectively with colleagues across the globe.

Moreover, since technical information often resides in research papers, manuals, and specialized documentation written in English, the students must develop effective reading strategies to grasp these complex materials and possess strong comprehension skills to extract critical information. Besides, as future engineers and telecommunications professionals, the ability to deliver clear and engaging technical presentations is essential. Students need to hone their skills in explaining complex concepts concisely, utilizing visual aids effectively, and confidently fielding questions from diverse audiences.

At the global level, it is important to note that the landscape of talent acquisition is undergoing a dynamic shift worldwide, especially in Asia, with South Korea and China emerging as key players in the global recruitment of talent. This growing trend reflects the increasing demand for expertise that transcends national boundaries, which widens the horizon for our students. As Laurence Anthony (2018) points out, In South Korea, for example, Samsung, a leader in electronics manufacturing, explicitly states on its recruitment page that English proficiency is the sole language requirement for non-Korean graduates seeking positions within the company. This move underscores a strategic recognition of the value and necessity of a diversified international workforce with English proficiency as a prerequisite. Similarly, Chinese companies adopt a similar approach. For instance, Haier, a major player in the home appliance industry, and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), a leading energy corporation, are actively recruiting overseas talent with English language proficiency as a needed skill. These examples show that companies across the globe, particularly in Asia, are increasingly recognizing the value of a diverse and international workforce, actively seeking talent with the skills and experiences necessary to thrive in today's interconnected world where English is a lingua franca (Anthony, 2018, p. 31).

This situation shows how job market readiness is widely dependent on possessing the necessary language proficiency. English language skills directly impact students' readiness for employability in today's competitive job market. Whether writing good resumes, excelling in interviews, or working in multinational companies, proficiency in specialized English is essential not only for INPT graduates but also for graduates from similar schools, to succeed in their future careers. In general, this success extends beyond technical expertise to develop a strong foundation in specialized English language skills, encompassing technical vocabulary, professional communication, cultural awareness, and presentation abilities.

As businesses increasingly operate on a global scale, with international branches and cross-border transactions, the need for clear and fluent communication across the organization has become paramount. To bridge this gap, companies are adopting various strategies. Some invest in in-house English language courses tailored specifically for business communication (Business English), while others rely on specialized language schools. This surge in demand is reflected in the mushrooming

number of coursebooks dedicated solely to Business English (BE), highlighting the critical role effective business English plays in today's internationalized business landscape (Ur, 2024, p. 6).

4.2 The gap between existing language proficiency and industry requirements

The gap between current language proficiency and industry needs often manifests in students' struggles with expressing complex technical ideas, comprehending intricate texts, or conveying their expertise effectively. While the students at INPT typically enter with a foundation in general English from their prior education, their proficiency often falls short of the specialized language skills demanded by the industry. This gap between existing language skills and industry requirements can affect a graduate's ability to succeed in the workplace. In other words, because the telecommunications and engineering sectors require a high level of technical English proficiency, students at the INPT need a strong foundation in all four key areas of language use.

Therefore, reading comprehension, the ability to understand and interpret technical documents, research papers, and manuals written in English is crucial. The ability to draft concise and accurate reports, proposals, and project documentation is also essential for effective communication with colleagues and clients. Oral fluency is also vital as professionals must be able to participate confidently in meetings, presentations, and cross-cultural interactions. As for technical vocabulary, understanding and using specialized vocabulary related to networking, software development, and telecommunication systems is vital for clear and efficient communication within the industry.

5. A Strategy for Implementing Successful ESP Programs

Implementing ESP programs effectively requires a strategic approach. "There is no room for teaching practices dissociated from the world we live in, which is a place rich in different emerging genres; it is highly semiotic, technological, and global" (de Souza Gomes, 2020, p. 91). The selection of teaching methodology and materials often presents a dynamic interplay for educators. In an optimal scenario, a pre-existing textbook that aligns seamlessly with the chosen pedagogy might be readily available, but this is not always the case. This resource could then serve as the course foundation, potentially requiring minor adaptations to cater for the specific needs and learning styles of the target learners. However, the reality is that a perfectly aligned textbook may not always exist.

In such situations, educators must demonstrate resourcefulness and adaptability. The absence of a pre-designed curriculum should not be viewed as a hindrance to effective instruction, but rather as an opportunity for creativity. Educators can rely on their expertise to create relevant materials, drawing upon a diverse range of available resources such as online platforms, authentic materials from the target domain, and even student-generated content. This adaptability allows educators to tailor the learning experience to the unique needs of their students, creating a more engaging and ultimately, more effective learning environment (Anthony, 2018, p. 4). To this end, below, are some key recommendations to consider when implementing ESP programs at institutions like the INPT.

5.1 Enhancing Language Learning with Authentic Materials

Beyond traditional textbooks, exposing students to authentic materials, such as technical manuals, research papers, and industry reports, offers a wealth of benefits. This approach enhances language learning by providing real-world context and exposure to domain-specific language. Students not only improve their proficiency but also gain valuable insights into industry terminology and communication styles. Authentic materials, authored by and for professionals in the field, provide students with a window into current practices and trends. For instance, technical manuals used by engineers or

research papers published in renowned scientific journals offer a glimpse into the precise and specialized language used in these domains. Integrating these materials into the curriculum is a way for educators to better prepare students for the language demands of their future careers and ensure a deeper understanding of their chosen fields.

In addition to authentic materials, ESP professionals can rely on the value of industry case studies in language education. Learning takes on a new dimension when students are presented with real-world challenges. Integrating industry case studies in teaching ESP is a chance for the students to get immersed in technical problems and their practical solutions, offering them a deeper understanding of the field. This approach, a cornerstone of effective language education, bridges the theoretical and the practical. It provides students with a window into the complex world of industry and allows them to explore the communication strategies employed by professionals. Industry case studies offer a rich context for language learning, as students navigate technical jargon, concise explanations, and clear instructions, which are essential elements of effective communication in professional settings. Through this method, students not only enhance their language skills but also develop critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, equipping them to tackle similar challenges in their future careers. The case study approach encourages active learning, creating a dynamic and engaging educational experience that mirrors the complexities and rewards of real-world problem-solving.

The teaching materials can be more engaging with the integration of multimedia resources in ESP Programs. The integration of technology in education has opened a world of engaging learning opportunities. ESP programs can greatly benefit from the incorporation of multimedia resources such as videos, podcasts, and online simulations to enhance student engagement and motivation. These resources offer diverse learning experiences, catering to different learning styles and providing clear explanations of complex technical concepts. With multimedia, educators can bring abstract ideas to life, making challenging content more accessible and memorable. For instance, a video tutorial on a relevant process or design can offer a step-by-step visual guide, while an interactive simulation can allow students to virtually experiment with different electrical circuits. Additionally, podcasts featuring industry experts can provide valuable insights and expose students to the language and communication styles used in professional settings. Thus, ESP programs can use multimedia resources to create dynamic and immersive learning environments that capture students' interest and improve their understanding of technical information.

5.2 Innovative Teaching Methods for engaging students and enhancing skills

Teaching ESP courses could make use of innovative teaching methods to engage students and enhance their communication and language skills. These innovative methods may comprise methods such as project-based learning, flipped classrooms, task-based learning, collaborative learning, and language labs.

5.2.1 Project-Based Learning: A Hands-on Approach

Project-based learning is a powerful teaching methodology that encourages students to learn by doing. Thus, integrating this approach into ESP courses presents students with industry-relevant projects that require them to apply their language skills to practical, real-world scenarios. This method enhances their language proficiency while simultaneously developing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Through collaborative projects, students gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter and develop valuable soft skills that are highly transferable to their future careers.

5.2.2 Flipped Classroom: Revolutionizing Traditional Lectures

The flipped classroom method turns the traditional lecture format around. In this approach, students take ownership of their learning by engaging with core technical content independently. They can access pre-recorded lectures, online readings, or video tutorials at their own pace, freeing up valuable class time for interactive activities and discussions. Devoting classroom sessions to application, collaboration, and engagement allows the flipped classroom model to promote a deeper understanding of the material and enhance communication skills, creating a dynamic and active learning environment.

5.2.3 Task-Based Learning: Beyond Rote Memorization

Task-based learning is a forward-thinking approach that immerses students in realistic scenarios, moving beyond rote memorization. In this approach, tasks are designed to mirror the communication demands of the chosen fields, helping students to develop practical language skills that are directly applicable to their future professions. Tasks such as creating technical reports, analysing data sets, or solving complex engineering problems in English constitute a dynamic learning experience that strengthens students' communication abilities, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving strategies, preparing them for the challenges they will encounter in the real world.

5.2.4 Collaborative Learning for Teamwork and Communication

Collaborative learning is a crucial aspect of ESP programs, as it mirrors the teamwork that is essential in modern professional settings. Collaborative learning encourages students to work together on technical tasks through group projects, which helps them develop strong communication skills and learn to effectively exchange ideas and information. This method creates a sense of community and mutual learning, enhancing their ability to function as effective team players. Collaborative learning also promotes critical thinking and problem-solving, as students work on tasks that require diverse skill sets and perspectives, preparing them for successful collaboration in their future careers.

5.2.5 Modern Resources: Language Labs and Technology

Integrating modern learning resources, such as multimedia-equipped language labs, provides students with an interactive and engaging language practice environment. These language labs offer a range of resources, from virtual simulations that replicate real-life scenarios to self-assessment tools that allow students to track their progress. Therefore, language labs help to create personalized learning experiences that promote student engagement and motivation. This blend of language instruction and technology enhances the overall learning process, making it more accessible, interactive, and tailored to individual needs.

5.3 Assessment Practices

Effective evaluation forms one of the cornerstones of a well-designed ESP course. While assessing learner progress through standardized testing remains critical to gauge language skill improvement, a comprehensive ESP evaluation extends beyond this initial measure. It encompasses a holistic evaluation of the course itself, including the efficacy of the chosen materials, the quality of instruction delivered, and importantly, the instructor's effectiveness in facilitating learning. Analysing test results offers a valuable data point in this process. If a significant majority of participants demonstrate substantial improvement in their target language skills and complete the course, it serves as a strong indicator of the instructor's successful course design and delivery (Anthony, 2018, pp. 49–50).

One key type of assessment for evaluating real-world skills is Performance-Based Assessment. This type of assessment moves beyond traditional grammar tests as it offers a more holistic evaluation of students' language skills and their ability to apply them in practical, real-world situations. This method involves tasks such as writing technical proposals, delivering presentations on technical topics, or participating in simulated business meetings. When students engage in these activities, they demonstrate their proficiency in using language effectively within the context of their chosen field. Thus, performance-based assessment provides a more accurate understanding of students' communication skills and their readiness to apply their knowledge in professional settings, giving instructors valuable insights into the effectiveness of the ESP program.

Another type of assessment that can benefit ESP students is Portfolio Assessment. Creating a portfolio is a powerful way for students to showcase their language development and reflect on their learning journey. A portfolio might include samples of their technical writing, presentations, and even reflections on their progress and challenges encountered. This method of assessment encourages students to take ownership of their learning and engage in self-evaluation and critical reflection. Additionally, it provides instructors with a comprehensive view of each student's progress, strengths, and areas for improvement, allowing for more tailored guidance and feedback.

Self-Assessment and Peer Review are other means of helping students develop their critical thinking and communication skills. Encouraging students to engage in self-assessment and peer review creates a culture of critical thinking and constructive feedback. When students reflect on their work, they develop a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, taking ownership of their learning process. Similarly, providing feedback to peers helps students hone their critical analysis skills and communicate their thoughts clearly and respectfully. This process enhances their communication skills and promotes a supportive learning environment, as students learn from one another's strengths and weaknesses, which creates a collaborative and mutually beneficial educational experience. Innovation is key to developing effective ESP programs. Combining innovative teaching methods, utilizing authentic materials, and implementing performance-based assessment practices are vital for ESP programs so that they can equip graduates with the language skills, technical knowledge, and confidence they need to thrive in the globalized workforce. However, it is important to remember that these approaches should be tailored to the specific context of each institution and the unique needs of the students.

It is important to remember that each institution has its unique context. Tailoring these strategies to fit the specific needs of INPT and other institutions is essential for maximizing the impact of ESP programs. Implementing these recommendations systematically can empower graduates with the language skills, technical knowledge, and cultural awareness they need to survive in the globalized technical job market.

6. Empowering ESP Instructors: Strategies for Continuous Improvement

Effective English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs rely heavily on the expertise and dedication of their instructors. However, simply having qualified instructors is not enough. Providing ongoing support and opportunities for professional development are crucial for ensuring the long-term success of ESP programs. Teachers and instructors of English play a vital role in preparing learners for future endeavours. They can function as facilitators, igniting students' interest and showing them what awaits them in the real world. However, they can become gatekeepers, imposing rigid, test-driven curricula that restrict their learning and development (Rocha-Antonin, 2020). The choice, however, extends beyond the individual educator. External pressures and circumstances can influence the curriculum, potentially favouring rote memorization for standardized tests at the expense of cultivating critical

thinking skills and active learning. In an ideal role, teachers should endeavour to strike a balance between introducing students to new contextual ideas and acknowledging the value of students' unique contributions to their learning. By doing so, they can empower students to develop not only the linguistic skills necessary for academic success but also the intellectual curiosity and adaptability required to succeed in a globalized world (Rocha-Antonin, 2020, p. 14).

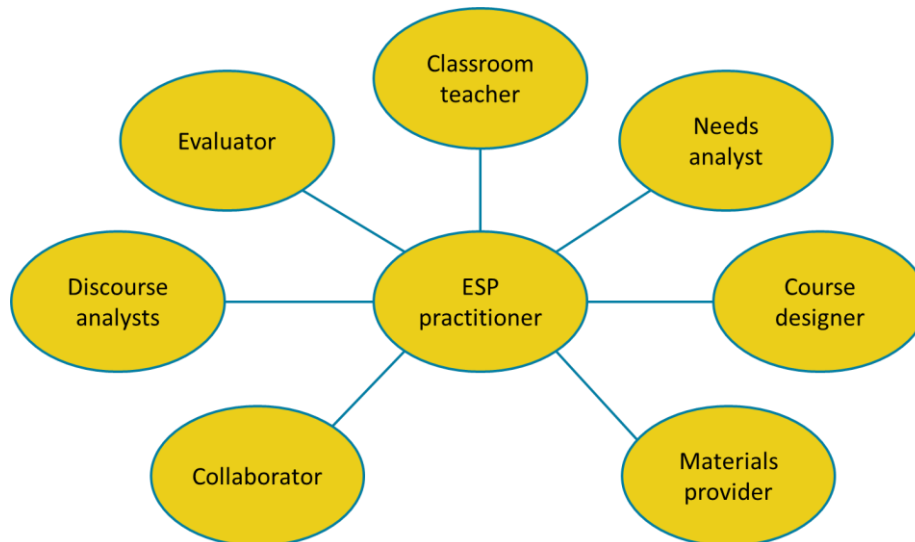


Figure 3. “Roles of the ESP practitioner” (Woodrow, 2017, p. 54)

A persistent challenge in Africa, particularly in French-speaking regions, is the recruitment of qualified English teachers for technical and vocational schools (Gaye, 2020, p. 205). Effectively bridging the gap between general English language teaching (EFL/ESL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) necessitates tailored support for instructors. Transitioning EFL/ESL teachers to ESP roles requires equipping them with the necessary knowledge and tools to navigate the specialized fields their students will encounter (Gaye, 2020, pp. 206–207). A core competency for ESP instructors is the ability to conduct thorough needs analyses. This initial step allows for the development of curriculum and materials precisely aligned with the specific language skills and knowledge students require in their chosen professions (Gaye, 2020, p. 208). Furthermore, expertise in discourse and genre analysis is crucial. Understanding the specific language patterns and structures used in different professional contexts empowers ESP teachers to develop the communication skills students need for success (Gaye, 2020, p. 208).

In terms of teacher roles, Kavanoz (2020) underscores the multifaceted nature of ESP teaching, highlighting the broad range of competencies required of ESP instructors (2020, p. 250). These educators transcend the role of teacher, acting as course designers, materials developers, and collaborators. They work with students, subject matter experts, and other stakeholders to create a dynamic and effective learning environment (Stewart, 2018, p. 142). Diversity within ESP teaching teams is also an asset. Guardado & Light (2020, p. 4) emphasize that teams with a variety of educational backgrounds, language skills, and cultural experiences can bring a wealth of perspectives to curriculum development, ultimately enriching the learning experience for students.

Support for ESP teachers can take several forms and cover different aspects of their professional development. First, to enhance the skills of ESP instructors, offering targeted workshops is essential. These workshops should be tailored to address specific needs, covering areas such as ESP

methodology, curriculum design that integrates language proficiency with technical content, and the development of valid assessment practices. Instructors can also gain valuable insights and expand their professional network by interacting with experienced educators and industry professionals. Regular workshops facilitate a dynamic learning environment, ensuring that educators stay updated with the latest advancements and best practices in ESP instruction.

Another way of supporting ESP teachers is through establishing communities of practice. These communities are a powerful way to encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing among ESP instructors. Communities of practice create a platform for educators to connect, share ideas, and seek support from peers within and across different institutions. Through online forums, webinars, and collaborative projects, participants can exchange best practices, discuss challenges, and explore innovative approaches to ESP teaching. This sense of community enhances professional growth and promotes a culture of continuous improvement, benefiting both instructors and their students.

Moreover, implementing a system of peer observation and feedback is a valuable tool for refining teaching practices. Observing each other's classes enables ESP instructors to identify areas of strength and weakness in their colleagues' teaching methods, which is essential for establishing a culture of continuous improvement. The feedback received allows instructors to reflect on their teaching, make necessary adjustments, and ultimately enhance their classroom effectiveness. This process not only benefits individual instructors but also improves student learning outcomes, creating a positive impact on the entire ESP program.

ESP instructors should also be encouraged to engage in research activities related to their field. This may involve investigating teaching methodologies, analysing student performance data, or exploring emerging trends within specific technical industries. Ways of supporting ESP teachers include supporting participation in conferences, providing resources for research, and promoting the publication of findings in scholarly journals. Thus, institutions can enhance the overall knowledge base of ESP, which not only benefits the instructors' professional development but also contributes to the advancement of the field, ensuring that ESP programs remain innovative and effective.

Another aspect of supporting ESP teachers is through establishing mentorship programs, which is a valuable way to support and guide newer ESP instructors. Pairing newer ESP instructors with experienced colleagues and mentors can offer practical advice, share valuable resources, and provide a sounding board for ideas and challenges. Mentorship relationships create a sense of community and support, allowing newer instructors to develop their teaching skills and confidence. This program ensures a smooth transition into the role of an ESP instructor and promotes a culture of collaboration and continuous professional growth.

In the same vein, institutions play a crucial role in ensuring that ESP instructors have access to the latest teaching resources. This includes providing access to current textbooks, online platforms with relevant content, and industry-specific materials. Institutions can significantly enhance the quality of ESP instruction by investing in relevant library databases, subscribing to ESP teaching resources, and collaborating with industry partners. Having access to diverse and up-to-date resources enables instructors to design engaging, accurate, and industry-aligned lessons, ultimately benefiting student learning.

Similarly, encouraging instructors to engage in reflective practice is a powerful tool for self-improvement. Regular reflection on teaching methods, student feedback, and areas for improvement helps instructors identify their strengths and weaknesses. Maintaining journals, participating in blogging discussions, or engaging in peer reflection conversations allows instructors to critically

evaluate their teaching practices and make informed decisions for continuous improvement. This process is a way of establishing a culture of self-evaluation and ensures that instructors remain passionate, effective, and responsive to the evolving needs of their students.

One cannot mention ways of supporting ESP teachers without mentioning administrative support as it is vital to the success of ESP programs. Administrators should recognize the importance of ESP and demonstrate their commitment through resource allocation and support initiatives. This may include providing faculty development grants, offering sabbaticals for advanced ESP training, and financially supporting attendance at relevant conferences. Administrators play a critical role in ensuring a highly skilled and dedicated teaching force by prioritizing ESP and investing in the professional development of instructors, which ultimately enhances the quality of education received by students.

7. Building Stronger ESP Programs: Partnerships, Research, and Policy

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs play a vital role in equipping graduates with the language skills needed to thrive in technical fields. However, to ensure their continued effectiveness, several key areas require attention, namely partnerships, research, and policy changes.

Strong partnerships with industry professionals are integral to the success of ESP programs. Through collaboration with stakeholders, ESP educators can stay attuned to the real-world demands and language skills required for various technical fields. Industry partners provide valuable insights into the specific language needs and contexts of their sectors. This collaboration takes shape through industry internships and guest lectures, offering students practical work experiences and exposure to authentic language use in professional settings. Additionally, international partnerships with universities abroad enhance cross-cultural understanding and provide valuable opportunities for student exchanges and the development of global competencies and language skills.

Research is also a cornerstone of effective ESP practice. Needs analysis research is crucial for understanding the specific language requirements of students in different technical fields, ensuring that the ESP curriculum is tailored to address their unique communication challenges. Research on teaching methods helps identify the most effective approaches for ESP learners, allowing educators to create dynamic and engaging learning environments. Furthermore, research on assessment validity and reliability ensures that ESP programs accurately evaluate students' language skills and their ability to apply them in professional contexts, ultimately enhancing the quality of ESP instruction.

In terms of policy changes, they play a pivotal role in ensuring the development and success of ESP programs. Formal recognition of ESP as a vital component of education is essential, sending a clear message about its importance. Thus, integrating ESP into national curricula ensures that students have consistent access to these crucial language skills throughout their academic journey. Additionally, policy changes should include dedicated resource allocation for ESP materials, teacher training, and infrastructure upgrades. Language policy considerations are also key, aiming for a balance between promoting local languages and equipping graduates with global communication skills for the international workforce.

Ongoing educational reform is necessary to keep ESP programs relevant and responsive to industry advancements. Regular curriculum revisions ensure that ESP content aligns with current trends and technological developments. The implementation of teacher training policies promotes continuous professional development, ensuring that ESP instructors are equipped with the latest teaching methodologies and industry knowledge. Furthermore, quality assurance policies play a critical role in

maintaining consistent standards across ESP programs, establishing benchmarks and evaluation processes to monitor and enhance program effectiveness.

Moreover, raising awareness about the importance of ESP is a collective responsibility shared by ESP advocates, educators, administrators, and policymakers. Outreach initiatives targeting these stakeholders highlight the impact of successful ESP programs on graduates' careers. ESP teachers and professionals can collectively advocate for the value of ESP and garner support for its integration across educational institutions by showcasing how ESP education equips individuals with the essential language skills needed in technical fields. This collective effort ensures that ESP programs receive the recognition and resources they need to thrive, ultimately benefiting graduates as they embark on their professional journeys in a globalized world.

8. Conclusion

This study highlighted the critical role of instructors in ESP programs. These instructors, armed with knowledge of student needs and industry trends, bridge the gap between education and the workplace. ESP instructors equip graduates with the specialized language skills needed for technical careers by tailoring content and incorporating real-world scenarios. This targeted approach benefits graduates by reducing the skills gap and allowing them to make immediate contributions to employers.

Moreover, ESP instructors create engaging learning environments that showcase the practical application of language skills. This might involve case studies, simulations, or projects requiring students to apply their language skills to solve real-world problems. Instructors motivate students and ensure a deeper understanding of the value of ESP programs by ensuring that classroom learning will meet the needs of students' future careers. Thus, ESP instructors need to continuously improve their teaching methods through ongoing evaluation. This ensures ESP programs remain relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of students and industry.

To ensure ESP graduates are well-equipped for success, ESP programs must actively take into consideration several issues. First, ESP programs must focus on technical vocabulary, industry-specific scenarios, and practical communication skills relevant to the targeted field. Second, these programs must also expose the students to real-world, authentic materials and communication tools such as technical manuals, case studies, and industry reports to allow them to practice using the language in its natural context. Last but not least, engaging students in interactive practice activities such as role plays, simulations, and collaborative projects that mimic real-world professional interactions helps develop not just communication skills but also confidence in using English in a technical setting.

In conclusion, ESP instructors are a cornerstone of successful ESP programs. Their ability to tailor content, bridge the education-industry gap, ensure engagement, and continuously improve teaching methods empowers graduates for success in a competitive global job market. That is why ESP instructors play a vital role in preparing future technical professionals for the international stage and nurturing them with strong communication skills. While this paper discussed the general situation of ESP in Morocco from a wide perspective, with the objective of looking at the general picture, future work will need to include a detailed methodological framework, including step-by-step guides and action plans, to ensure the proposed strategies can be effectively implemented at INPT in particular and other engineering schools in general.

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