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Aleksandra Szymańska-Tworek, Julia Makowska-Songin

Teacher quality as a prerequisite for quality education: needs and expectations of ESP teachers towards professional development in Polish tertiary education context

Abstract: The present paper examines the needs and expectations of academic ESP (English for Specific Purposes) teachers towards professional development in the context of Polish tertiary education. Quantitative and qualitative data provided by 82 respondents representing tertiary education institutions in Poland was examined and described. ESP teachers were asked about their experience and expectations regarding the following four areas of potential development: language competence, field-specific knowledge, knowledge of ELT (English Language Teaching) methodology and knowledge of ESP methodology. The results of the present study are to a large extent consistent with the wider literature on the subject. The main themes emerging from this research are: respondents' strong interest in professional development, focus on skills specifically related to ESP in favour of those of EGP (English for General Purposes), lack of satisfaction with regard to availability, relevance and quality of formal in-service training, especially training related to ESP instruction. Additionally, it was noted that ESP teachers frequently recognise their lack of specialist knowledge as a long-standing, daunting problem. It was concluded that ESP teachers need and expect formal assistance related to their everyday teaching practice.

Key words: ESP, teacher development, tertiary education, in-service training

1. Introduction

The impetus for the present article was our previous study (SZYMAŃSKA-TWOREK and MAKOWSKA-SONGIN 2017), the aim of which was to inquire into the problems and challenges that teachers of English for Medical Purposes

(EMP) working in higher education institutions in Poland need to address in their teaching practice. The results of the study showed that one of the major problems cited by EMP teachers was connected with limited possibilities of professional development. More specifically, our respondents expressed dissatisfaction with limited access to specialised in-service training courses. More than half of the respondents acknowledged that their initial educational training as a teacher was insufficient to prepare them for teaching EMP. While 86% of them expressed a wish to invest in their development through taking part in seminars, workshops or other educational events devoted to EMP or ESP (English for Specific Purposes), 75% noted that the number of such events in Poland is not sufficient. Some of the events respondents took part in were criticised by them as too general, impractical or irrelevant. As commented by one of the respondents:

[T]hese events usually do not meet my expectations, when organized by publishers – they are focused on recommending textbooks, organized by foreign language departments – they are an occasion for people studying for their doctoral degrees to read parts of their dissertations, no-one has ever asked me about my needs and expectations concerning the type or form of conference events. (Teacher statement found in SZYMAŃSKA-TWOREK and MAKOWSKA-SONGIN 2017: 74)

What is more, teachers complained that the costs of training or conference expenses are rarely covered by their home institutions.

These results provided an impulse for the present article and served as a springboard for more nuanced questions about what specifically ESP teachers need and expect from in-service professional development. For the purpose of the study, we make a distinction between four areas of ESP teacher development. First, as ESP teachers are also users and teachers of general English, they may be interested in the improvement of their target language proficiency. Communicative competence, although often neglected in in-service teacher training (as will be discussed shortly), is one of the key factors contributing to the success of the whole teaching-learning process. Second, ESP teachers may need support in gaining knowledge about their students' specialisation, that is, field-specific terminology and topics. Third, although trained in methodology of foreign language teaching during their initial teacher preparation, teachers need to keep abreast of recent trends and developments in ELT (English Language Teaching) methodology. Fourth, as there are differences between teaching ESP and EGP (English for General Purposes), teachers may be interested in learning more about the specifics of ESP methodology and update their knowledge in this regard. In the theoretical part of this article the four areas of development are discussed. First, however, we present some general introductory informa-

tion about teacher development and professionalism. The second part of the article is devoted to the presentation of the results of the study. That section is subsequently followed by the discussion of the research results and conclusion.

2. Teacher development

When talking about professional development, one may hear an opinion that there is a difference between a ten-year experience and a one-year experience multiplied ten times. This anecdotal evidence is supported by research. The connection between teachers' development and student performance has been confirmed by both qualitative and quantitative research (e.g. DARLING-HAMMOND 2000, VILLEGAS-REIMERS 2003). The world is changing at an increasing speed and teaching profession is not isolated or protected from these changes. Teachers need to constantly rethink and revise their classroom practices because even tried and tested solutions may not stand the test of time (SOWA 2009: 444). As put by PETTIS (2002: 395), "[d]evelopment of teaching competence is our professional responsibility." This commitment to development and improvement is in fact part and parcel of the notion of professionalism. When defining professionalism, UR (2002: 388) contrasts it with other terms: lay, amateur, technician, academic. She then argues:

[...] to say that we English teachers are professionals is to imply that: [...] We are an identifiable group, whose members are interested in interaction with one another for the sake of learning [...] We are committed to reaching certain standards of performance [...] We do not just teach: We also learn, continually [...]. (UR 2002: 391)

As already stated, the inspiration for the present paper was our previous study, which showed that ESP teachers are dissatisfied with the number and quality of training courses available for in-service teachers. However, what needs to be emphasised is that formal training is not and should not be the only form of professional growth. Personal commitment to professionalism and self-development are key to educational excellence. As argued by PETTIS (2002: 396):

Going to the occasional workshop because it is organized for us, or because we are funded by employers, although mutually beneficial to a degree, is not enough for our own and our profession's well-being. Each of us, I believe, must be personally committed to seeking out additional opportunities to learn and develop.

Personal commitment to professional growth may manifest itself in different actions and take different forms. POTOCKA and SIEROCKA (2013: 175) suggest engaging in self-reflection¹ or teacher research² and taking on new roles, for example, becoming a teacher mentor or a materials writer. All of these tools have the potential of throwing new light on different aspects of teaching, thus providing a fresh perspective. In the context of ESP, CHEN (2000) is a study devoted to how teachers deprived of the benefits of formal ESP education can make use of self-training techniques for self-improvement. As reflected by CHEN (2000: 390), this approach “is not a substitute for conventional training entirely: not the life boat itself, but rather a life belt.”

Teachers’ commitment to development is closely connected with their motivation to learn. As reported by GOROZIDIS and PAPAIOANNOU (2014: 2), teachers who are highly motivated in teaching or class preparation are not necessarily always equally motivated to engage in self-study and development. They may feel satisfied and effective as teachers and see no need for further training or they may be unwilling to devote their personal time to such activities. However, as argued throughout the present article, there is no quality education without teachers taking responsibility for their teaching competence. Motivation to learn may prove even more critical in the context of ESP, where the topic of development seems to be neglected. While the bulk of research has been devoted to the issue of teacher professional development in ELT, research on ESP teacher education has been limited (MASTER 2005, BASTURKMEN 2014, DUYEN 2014, LESIAK-BIELAWSKA 2015a). The same applies to what LAFFORD (2012: 13) calls “professional infrastructure”, that is courses, workshops, seminars, conferences or magazines dedicated to teacher development – the number of those devoted to the domain of ESP is more modest in comparison to those on EGP, although ESP teachers are already at an advantage vis-à-vis their non-English LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) colleagues (LAFFORD 2012). DUYEN (2014: 235) points out that ESP teachers, faced with limited opportunities for development,

¹ Reflective teaching is a widely and meticulously researched phenomenon and one of the key concepts in teacher education and development. The benefits of reflective practice for teachers include “a deep understanding of their teaching styles and an ability to define how they will grow toward greater effectiveness as teachers. Other benefits include validation or repudiation of teachers’ ideals, challenges to traditional modes of practice, the recognition of teaching as artistry, and respect for diversity in applying theory to classroom practice” (SHANDOMO 2010: 112). A wealth of studies on reflection in various directions include: BROOKFIELD (1995), ZEICHNER and LISTON (1996), MOON (2004), KORTHAGEN and VASALOS (2005), MCGARR and MOODY (2010) and GABRYŚ-BARKER (2012).

² Teacher research, that is research conducted by teachers, is based on the idea that “by investigating teaching and learning processes in classrooms, we ourselves learn more about the craft and the science of teaching so that we may improve our work as teachers” (BAILEY 2001: 490). For an exhaustive account on teacher research, see NUNAN (1997), BAILEY (2001), BORG (2007, 2010, 2015, 2017).

are confused about their career path and have no vision of their professional development. As reflected by one of the teachers in his study:

I really want to do something for my own professional development but I don't have any plans at the moment and to be honest, I don't know where to start. [...] I wish we can be trained formally to be real ESP teachers. (Teacher statement found in DUYEN 2014: 235)

The following section looks at the development of ESP teachers from four perspectives: general English language competence, field-specific knowledge and related terminology, knowledge of general ELT methodology and knowledge of ESP methodology.

3. Areas of development for in-service ESP teachers

3.1. General English language competence

There is a consensus both among scholars (e.g. LANGE 1990, KOMOROWSKA 2005, WERBIŃSKA 2006, PAWLAK 2011) and classroom practitioners (e.g. BERRY 1990) that high proficiency in the target language is an indispensable competence of a successful foreign language teacher. In other words, quality FL (Foreign Language) education requires that a teacher is highly skilled in the language she/he teaches. Paradoxically though, the FL classroom is far from being the optimal place for teachers to improve or even maintain their language competence. As explained by SZUPICA-PYRZANOWSKA and MALESA (2017: 49), “[f]oreign language teachers, who often fight an uphill battle trying to prevent their learners’ lack of progress, may also face a different challenge. Namely, their own linguistic skills may regress as well.” Literature on language attrition, that is “the process in the course of which one’s proficiency in a given language is hampered or even totally blocked” (BIEDRZYŃSKA 2012: 166), has consistently proven that foreign language teachers, especially those who work with low proficiency students, are likely to experience some kind of language stagnation and become partly deskilled in the language they teach. The areas of language which seem to attrite more than others are articles and reported speech, as reported by WŁOSOWICZ (2017: 91) and the inconsistent use of English inflection, non-target syntactic structures and erroneous lexical choices, as reported by SZUPICA-PYRZANOWSKA and MALESA (2017: 50). The reasons for this regression, enumerated by WYSOCKA (2009), PAWLAK (2011), SZUPICA-

PYRZANOWSKA and MALESA (2017) and WŁOSOWICZ (2017) are: regular contact with students' errors, adjusting language to the learners' level, teaching low-level students, speaking L1 in the classroom, having limited contact with words and structures which are not part of the curriculum, over-reliance on the same didactic materials, having limited access to the target language (TL) on a regular basis, having limited contact with the TL community and paying insufficient attention to self-improvement. As concluded by WŁOSOWICZ (2017: 91), it is reasonable to argue, as counterintuitive as it may seem, that teaching is the source of language attrition. At the same time, however, we hypothesise, based on anecdotal evidence and our interactions with foreign language teachers, that having a break from teaching, for example in the form of parental leave (maternity or paternity leave) in the case of teachers who are parents, is also likely to put the teachers in danger of becoming gradually deskilled to some extent. Language skills, just like any other skills, when unused and untrained, undergo regression and parents who come back to teaching after a one-year- or two-year break may experience discomfort connected with their reduced language competence. Concluding, whether inside or outside the classroom, language competence of many language teachers is likely to attrite, unless preventative measures are taken.

PAWLAK (2011) is a paper devoted to the topic of developing language competence in in-service teacher training. The author emphasises that the improvement of target language proficiency is one of the priorities of in-service teacher education and points out that this element of teacher expertise is in fact often neglected. Pawlak argues that training in the domain of language competence should be routinely included in in-service teacher education either in the form of stand-alone courses or modules which are part of more extensive training programmes. His paper also includes a detailed proposal of what specific components this type of training should encompass.

3.2. Field-specific knowledge and related terminology

The role of subject knowledge in teacher expertise is one of the most widely discussed topics in LSP literature and a subject of some controversy (e.g. TROIKE 1994, BELCHER 2006, GAJEWSKA-SKRZYPCZAK 2010, LESIAK-BIELAWSKA 2015b, GAJEWSKA-SKRZYPCZAK and SAWICKA 2016). The position we take in this paper (and illustrate it below) is that 1) ESP teachers need to have at least some expertise in the content area and 2) teachers are likely to highly benefit from formal training in the language of their students' field of study because asking teachers to rely on help from content specialists or students often turns

out to be problematic or insufficient. In our view, in the case of ESP teachers, the development of target language competence should go hand in hand with the development of field-specific knowledge. Of course, it is reasonable enough for teachers to acknowledge the position voiced, for example, by ELLIS and JOHNSON (1994: 26) that good ESP teachers are above all “experts in presenting and explaining the language” who have the ability “to ask the right questions and make good use of the answers.” However, content-area informed teachers are likely to be more confident in what they are doing (ROBINSON 1991, LESIAK-BIELAWSKA 2015a) and avoid the problems experienced and described in a diary by CHEN (2000), an ESP teacher in the field of business administration:

It seemed that they [students] did not understand what I had said about the chart. Actually, when I did the preparation last night, I did not foresee any problems, but right now I do feel something went wrong with my instruction on this section. I had fears about my lack of POM [Production and Operation Management] knowledge. What on earth is “the conversion process” in the context of POM? I felt I was stuttering. For the first time ever, I found myself waiting for the bell to ring. (Teacher statement found in CHEN 2000: 392–393)

CHEN (2000: 393) admits that this awkward situation which revealed her lack of knowledge of basic POM concepts made students feel apprehensive about the whole ESP course.

To compensate for the lack of field-specific knowledge, teachers are advised to resort to subject matter specialists for help (e.g. DUDLEY-EVANS and ST. JOHN 1998, MCFARLAND 2009, DUYEN 2014, ANTIĆ 2016). These specialists are practitioners (e.g. doctors, nurses), content teachers (e.g. teachers of medicine) or students (e.g. students of medicine). Although asking students for explanation or clarification on the subject of their specialisation is reported to have some benefits (e.g. WEBBER 1995, MCFARLAND 2009, DUYEN 2014), such as making students more engaged in the lesson, it may also lead to difficult situations. An example given by Duyen (2014) is that students may give different answers to the question posed by the teacher and start arguing with one another. As confessed by one of ESP teachers in Duyen’s study:

I was really confused in such situation. I myself do not know who is correct or not because my knowledge of medicine is limited. And you know, the students of the third year do not have a thorough knowledge of medical issues too. (Teacher statement found in DUYEN 2014: 233)

What is more, some students may feel disappointed that their ESP teacher is not expert in the field of their expertise:

I usually start Legal English courses with the words “Don’t be surprised that I will often ask you for your opinion about Legal English, as I actually may be inaccurate in some legal issues”. Then I often see surprised and somewhat disappointed faces, as apparently my Legal English students expect me to be not only a good English teacher but also to be a good lawyer. (SIEROCKA 2008: 36)

Cooperation with practitioners and content teachers may be equally problematic, or, as SIEROCKA (2008: 36) calls it, “discouraging”. Reaching out to specialists for subject-related information is difficult mainly because of their unavailability. DUYEN (2014: 233) points out that cooperation between ESP teachers, subject matter teachers and content departments is weak and unsystematic. These experiences are voiced by ESP teachers in the following statements:

Although I work in a medical environment, I practically have no access to them [subject specialists]. Anyway, I wouldn’t dare to bother them. (Teacher statement found in SZYMAŃSKA-TWOREK and MAKOWSKA-SONGIN 2017: 64)

When I found any difficult concept in medicine, I first look it up in [on] the internet or ask my students, I only ask other teachers of medicine in case I am still confused [...] but actually, I’m afraid to ask them such issues, you know, they are very busy. (Teacher statement found in DUYEN 2014: 233)

[...] whenever I ask my friends from university for help e.g. to set up some key issues, particularly in the legal domain, they agree to help but often delay their assistance not because they are reluctant to help, but because they are too busy or simply forget to do so. (SIEROCKA 2008: 36)

[...] this kind of consultation is time-consuming: if a teacher does not have a subject specialist in their immediate circle of colleagues, friends, family members or acquaintances – it takes time to find such a person. Additionally, even if they agree to help, I do not think there would not be a strong desire to cooperate continuously [...] (SIEROCKA 2008: 36)

The above arguments lead us to think that ESP teachers need to have at least some knowledge in the field of their students’ specialisation in order to be more effective, confident and credible as classroom instructors. While reaching out to students or subjects specialists for content-related information is a good way of gaining knowledge, it should not be treated as the only form of development in this domain. Providing teachers with professional support in the form of in-service training (workshops, courses, seminars, conferences, etc.) devoted to the language of the subject of their students’ expertise (e.g. English in medicine) is likely to highly contribute to ESP teachers’ professional development.

3.3. Knowledge of general ELT methodology

Although, as already stated, high proficiency in the target language is a *sine qua non* for a successful foreign language teacher, it is far from sufficient for making her/his teaching successful. The other competence which teachers need to have is extensive and regularly updated knowledge of ELT methodology. Rapid advances in technology (evidenced in the emergence of such concepts as “wearable devices”, “internet of things”, “ubiquitous computing”, “ubiquitous learning”, “mobile education”, “handheld learning”, “3D printing”) have resulted in major changes in the way we perceive and define the teaching-learning process. The last decades have also seen an increased interest in alternative models of education (e.g. Montessori schools, Waldorf schools, democratic schools), which may inspire teachers to seek new techniques and solutions. New trends and tendencies emerge all the time (e.g. FORDHAM and GODDARD 2013, CHYRK et al. 2015, HAELERMANS 2017). Teachers who received certification a decade ago are unlikely to be familiar with concepts such as “gamification”, “game-based learning”, “virtual reality”, “augmented reality”, “tutoring”, “neurodidactics”, unless they keep abreast of recent developments and advances in the domain of ELT. Of course, that is not to say that teachers need to incorporate all innovative techniques into their teaching. However, being aware of new trends or new paradigms in methodology lets them make an informed choice as to what and how to teach.

When talking about keeping up to date as a language teacher Crandall (2001: 535) observes: “[c]ompleting an academic program is really only the beginning of a lifelong quest to better understand our students, ourselves, our discipline, and the approaches and techniques we can use to help others to become competent users of English.” Among many options teachers can choose from in order to develop their knowledge of methodology, she (Crandall 2011: 535ff) enumerates among others: attending local, national or international conferences, reading relevant literature (journals, periodicals about language teaching), placing one’s name on mailing lists of textbook publishers, participating in online discussion groups, participating in various graduate programmes, doing classroom research, working collaboratively with other teachers, being mentored and then becoming a mentor to early-career teachers.

3.4. Knowledge of ESP methodology

The previous subsection discussed the need for teachers to keep up to date on developments in general ELT methodology; here we want to argue that ESP teachers should also build up a body of knowledge on how to teach ESP. ESP methodology is a controversial term; some authors (HUTCHINSON and WATERS 1987, BASTURKMEN 2006) argue that ESP has no distinctive methodology, while others (DUDLEY-EVANS and ST. JOHN 1998) point out that ESP teaching has its own methodology. Be that as it may, it has to be noted that certain aspects of ESP teaching are different from EGP and as such require specific treatment. What differentiates the two domains is, among other things, different interaction between the teacher and students. In the case of ESP it is students who are specialists in the subject matter and this carries considerable implications for methodology, affecting teacher and learner roles and autonomy. ESP teachers need to assume the roles of facilitator, moderator, advisor and need to be ready to give up some of their autonomy, while empowering students. Another aspect distinguishing ESP from EGP, which also carries consequences for the methodologies of both, is the dearth of commercially available teaching materials for ESP, especially when contrasted with the EGP market which abounds in high quality textbooks accompanied by CDs, DVDs, MP3s, Internet resources, reference books and teachers' guide books. As observed by BASTURKMEN (2014: 19):

Even published materials that appear to have some relevance since they concern areas of interest, such as, English for nursing, medical English or Academic Speaking, are likely to only have certain overlaps with the needs of the students in the class, the needs for which the class was established in the first place. Generally LSP teachers draw on published materials only selectively (BELCHER 2009) and they can rarely base an entire course on them as is sometimes possible in general language teaching.

Again, limited availability of teaching materials for ESP (as noted by SIEROCKA (2008: 35) “[...] the more specialized the course, the greater the rarity of teaching materials [...]”) has consequences for roles ESP teachers need to adopt – they need to design, create and evaluate their own materials. Apart from materials provider, DUDLEY-EVANS and ST. JOHN (1998) identify the following roles of ESP practitioners: teacher, course designer, collaborator (with subject specialists), researcher and evaluator of courses, materials, and student learning. It can be concluded that ESP teaching, although it shares many commonalities with EGP teaching, is more complex than the latter and may require more effort and engagement on the part of teacher. Teachers may

thus need more support in how to approach certain more problematic aspects of ESP methodology.

4. The study

4.1. Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to gain insight into what ESP teachers working in tertiary education institutions in Poland need and expect with regard to formal in-service professional development. The point of departure was our previous study (SZYMAŃSKA-TWOREK and MAKOWSKA-SONGIN 2017) which showed that EMP teachers are dissatisfied with professional development options available to them in the form of formal training and hence the present study aims to explore how specifically ESP teachers assess their needs and expectations in this regard. For this reason the present study does not inquire into non-formal possibilities for professional development, such as practising reflective teaching or reading relevant literature because, although highly useful and valuable, these are options which can be incorporated without the support of formal training.

To meet the objective of the study, the following research question was formulated: What are the needs and expectations of ESP teachers working in tertiary education institutions in Poland with regard to formal in-service professional development?

4.2. Participants of the study

The invitation to participate in the study was sent to 30 randomly selected institutions of tertiary education in Poland (15 universities, 8 universities of technology, 5 academies and 2 state higher vocational schools). As a whole, 11 institutions responded to it (5 universities, 5 universities of technology, and 1 academy), which resulted in the total number of 82 respondents. The institutions involved in the study are located in cities all across Poland: Białystok, Bielsko-Biała, Częstochowa, Gdańsk, Gliwice, Katowice, Rzeszów, Toruń, Warszawa, and Wrocław. Of 82 participants, 52 are employed in a university, 25 in a university of technology, and 1 in an academy. Only 4 respondents failed to provide the information regarding the institution they are employed in.

All respondents are ESP teachers. The faculties they teach are highly diversified and include Aeronautical Engineering, Architecture, Civil Engineering, Diplomacy, Economics, Information Technology, Law and Administration, Media Studies, Pedagogy and Physics, to name but a few. Respondents' experience as ESP teachers ranged from 3 to 40 years and averaged 17 years. As many as 95% of participants taught general English before they started teaching ESP and 66% of respondents still work as teachers of general English, apart from their duties as ESP teachers. Gender distribution of respondents is 69 (85%) female and 12 (15%) male (1 respondent failed to provide this information).

4.3. Description of the questionnaire

In this study one instrument was used, namely a self-administered, web-based questionnaire (see Appendix). It was designed to obtain a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire was sent to heads of departments of foreign languages of 30 randomly selected institutions of tertiary education in Poland (15 universities, 8 universities of technology, 5 academies and 2 state higher vocational schools) with the request to forward it to all ESP teachers working in these institutions.

The questionnaire, worded in English, includes 35 questions divided into seven parts. In the first part respondents are familiarised with the topic and structure of the questionnaire and asked some general questions about whether professional development is important to them, which form of professional development they find most useful, which area of professional competence they feel they need to improve, etc. Parts II, III, IV and V are named "general English language competence", "field specific knowledge and related terminology", "knowledge of ESP methodology", and "knowledge of general ELT methodology", respectively. They include questions about these four areas of professional competence, such as for example, whether respondents feel the need to improve in any of these areas, whether they attended any formal training in these areas and if so, how they assess the quality of this training. Part VI of the questionnaire was developed to inquire, among others, whether study subjects feel they have a lot of opportunities for formal professional development and whether they would like the institution they are employed in to provide formal training as a regular routine at work. The last section collected some basic personal information, most importantly about respondents' experience as ESP teachers, the institution they are employed in and the faculties they teach.

The questionnaire included both open and closed questions. The closed questions required respondents to consider a number of statements and to

classify them accordingly on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire also included a few questions in the yes/no format and a few multiple choice questions. All closed questions were followed by an open space in case teachers wanted to clarify or elaborate on their response. In the open-ended questions respondents were asked to make a comment on the issue expressed in the question. The language of the questionnaire was English and all answers to open-ended questions received from respondents were in English.

The questionnaire produced data of both qualitative and quantitative nature. When discussing the results of the study, the quantitative data is represented as a percentage and, in some cases, for more clarity, illustrated in the graphic form (Figures 1–6). The analysis of the open-ended questions was done through content analysis. The discussion of the findings is supported by quotations from the questionnaire. The quotations included represent strands of opinion expressed by groups of respondents rather than individual voices.

4.4. Results of the study

4.4.1. ESP teachers' views on the relevance and usefulness of professional development

As many as 93% of study subjects claimed that professional development is important to them.³ As emphasized in the following quotations:

I am always knowledge-hungry. :)

I do my best to take every opportunity of professional development.

It's necessary if you want to feel comfortable and self-confident as a teacher.

59% of respondents think that their initial educational training as a linguist/teacher was not enough to prepare them for teaching ESP. Mere 17% are of the opposite opinion, that is, they feel that their initial educational training was satisfactory in preparing them for the role of ESP teacher. When asked which form of professional development they find most useful, respondents indicate primarily formal training, that is, attending courses, seminars, workshops or

³ When presenting the data, for the sake of clarity the original 5-point scale has been folded into three categories: “disagree”, “agree”, and “neither agree, nor disagree”.

conferences (83%) and studying ESP literature and online sources (72%). All answers to this question are presented in Figure 1 below:

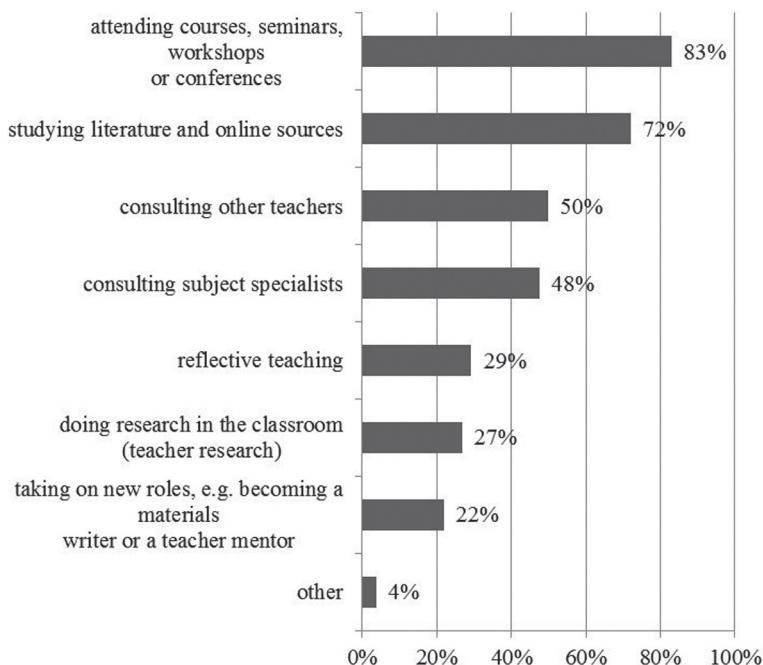


Figure 1. Forms of professional development considered most useful by ESP teachers

Source: Authors' own research

Although the options “consulting other teachers” and “consulting subject specialists” were chosen by respectively 50% and 48% of participants, there were also critical voices:

Direct consulting with other ESP teachers may bring a substantial burden of error, unless reviewed and published.

Funnily enough, I have hardly any access to subject specialists.

When asked about the form of development they spend most time on, the most common answer is studying literature and online sources (80%) as well as attending educational events (44%). Only a slim minority devotes time to consulting subject specialists (14%) and doing research in the classroom (15%). All answers are presented in the following Figure 2.

Asked about the area of professional competence they feel they need to improve, 74% of participants pointed to field-specific knowledge and related terminology. As many as 49% expressed a wish to enrich their knowledge of

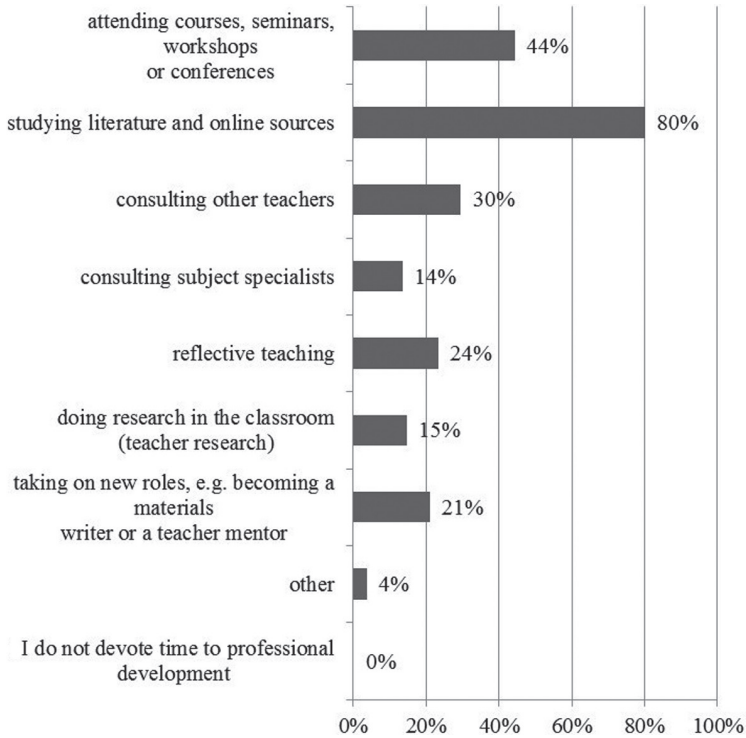


Figure 2. Forms of professional development ESP teachers spend most time on
Source: Authors' own research

ESP methodology. The remaining options generated more lukewarm interest, as presented in the following Figure 3:

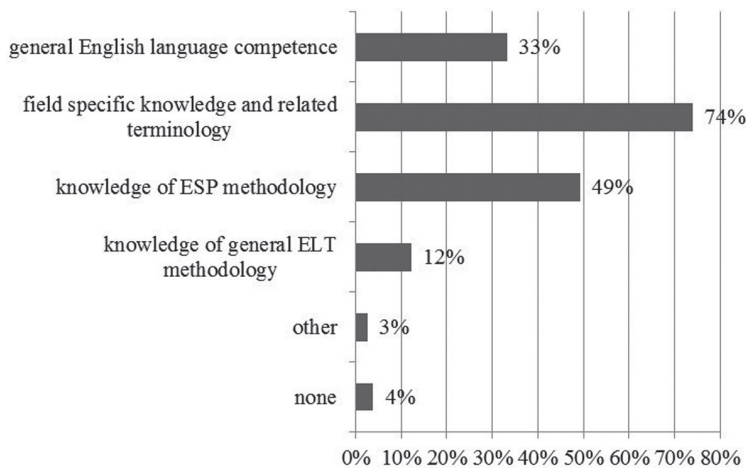


Figure 3. Areas of professional development ESP teachers feel they need to improve
Source: Authors' own research

4.4.2. General English language competence

The first question in this section of the questionnaire was whether respondents feel the need to improve their general English language competence: 43% gave a confirmatory answer, 28% a negative answer, and 29% neither agreed nor disagreed. When asked to evaluate their general English language competence, 63% of respondents claimed that it has generally improved since they started to work as a teacher, 26% that it has improved in some areas while in other areas it has deteriorated, 7% were of the opinion that their general English language competence has generally deteriorated since they started to work as a teacher and 3% of respondents found it difficult to give a definitive answer. Although the comments made by participants who state that their general English language competence has improved in some areas while in others it has deteriorated are highly varied, a general trend is that respondents' knowledge of technical and ESP lexis has advanced, while idiomatic language, some aspects of grammar, writing and in some cases speaking have been affected negatively. This is reflected by one of the respondents:

I've become an expert in ESP terminology, but I forgot an awful lot of idioms, phrasal verbs, proverbs, etc. My fluency is also affected. I regret it a lot, but there's not much I can do. The little free time I have I prefer to devote to honing ESP.

In the course of the last year, 44% of respondents attended some kind of formal training designed to improve their general English language competence (either in the form of language course, workshop or tuition). The number of such events ranged from 1 to 5 and averaged 2. The remaining 56% did not take part in this type of training. When respondents were asked the same question but about a longer period of time, namely that of the last five years, the results were similar: 49% gave a positive and 51% a negative answer. This time the number of events respondents took part in ranged from 1 to as many as 15 (in one case) and averaged 4. When assessing the quality of this type of training, about 70% of comments provided by respondents were positive, although most often reduced to a short, perfunctory statement, for example: "very useful" or "rather useful". More favourable comments were reserved for training that took place in English-speaking countries. As for the remaining 30% of comments, they were either hesitant ("medium to poor") or critical ("Not really; waste of time in most cases").

4.4.3. Field-specific knowledge and related terminology

As many as 70% of respondents agreed with the statement that they feel the need to improve their knowledge about their students' specialisation and related terminology. Only 7% of study subjects disagreed with this statement, while 23% neither agreed nor disagreed. This is reflected in the following comments:

[T]his is such a vast area, there is no way I can be satisfied with my knowledge.

I still feel the need although I have been doing it all the time.

I don't think I need to be an expert in my students' specialism but some familiarity would be useful and make me feel more comfortable.

When asked about what problems they encounter while trying to develop professionally in the area of field-specific knowledge and related terminology, respondents enumerated the following aspects:

- their lack of expertise in the subject of students' specialisation;
- insufficient offer of adequate training;
- lack of reliable and interesting materials, lack of good textbooks;
- lack of contact with experts in the field;
- lack of time.

It is especially the first two issues that participants of the study feel strongly about. The most daunting problem seems to be that respondents do not feel competent enough in the area of their students' expertise:

I don't remember chemistry or physics and in many cases the ideas described in specialist materials are too difficult to understand (not because of the language but because of the topics, it's all Greek to me).

I have no idea what I'm teaching about.

Understanding the concept, finding the most adequate Polish translation of English specialist terminology, awareness of subtle differences in meaning between synonymous terms.

I don't know if the terms I find on the Internet are actually used by the professionals and another problem is that knowing words is not enough. I have to know what I teach about, I have to know the topic inside out, not just superficially. Then I will know that what I teach is relevant to my students. I would love to be a specialist in what I teach, but I am just a specialist in the language and not the contents.

What is more, some respondents pointed out that gaining professional expertise is difficult in their case because they teach students not from one, but a few (even 13) different faculties:

I teach students from different faculties of the university, so I do not focus on one field of study. I have to develop my knowledge and vocabulary in a few areas and this is very time-consuming.

I cannot develop in just one field. We teach students from 13 different faculties. I'd have to develop in a few different directions simultaneously.

The second most frequently adduced problem, that of insufficient possibilities for adequate training in the area of field-specific knowledge and related terminology, is closely related to what was already said about respondents' (perceived) lack of professional expertise. Respondents complained that although they are interested in developing their knowledge, there are no adequate training possibilities or that the cost of training is not covered by their workplace institution:

[N]o appropriate training – at the higher level.

Not enough training or workshops available [...]

Such training is often not available.

Such specific training doesn't really exist. Developing field specific knowledge is my top priority but I'm left to my own devices. Surfing the net and reading niche trade magazines (for which I pay out of my own pocket) are the best solution here.

No such training opportunities in my hometown, which usually requires traveling to another city. This, in turn, means costs that my employer does not cover.

When asked if they attended some kind of formal training designed to develop their field-specific knowledge and related terminology in the course of the last year, 32% of participants answered affirmatively and 68% answered negatively. Respondents who gave a positive answer were asked about the number of such events and the answers ranged from 1 to 3 (on average 2). Respondents were also asked the same question on their training experience about a five-year period: 43% attended some training in the area of field-specific knowledge in the course of the last five years and 57% did not have this kind of experience. This time, the number of events ranged from 1 to 8 and averaged 3. Asked to evaluate the quality of training they took part in, about 60% of informants responded positively ("The courses were very useful and broadened my knowledge", "High quality, very useful"), the remaining 40% of comments

are either lukewarm (“Not very”, “Some of the workshops were pretty useful, some were a terrible waste of time”, “I haven’t found anything interesting yet”) or negative (“definitely not relevant”, “irrelevant and boring”).

4.4.4. Knowledge of general ELT methodology

30% of respondents feel the need to improve their knowledge of general ELT methodology, 32% do not feel such a need, and 38% place themselves in the middle of the scale. When asked if they attended any training designed to develop their knowledge of general ELT methodology (in the form of seminar, workshop, conference, tuition, etc.) in the course of the last year, 63% of informants gave an affirmative and 37% a negative answer. The number of these events ranged from 1 to 5 (on average 3). When asked about a five-year period, as many as 74% of respondents admitted to having taken part in formal training on general ELT methodology and 26% admitted no such experience. Those who attended enumerated 1 to even 20 such events (on average 7). Most respondents (about 60%) assess the quality of this training in positive terms as “useful”, “quite useful”, “pretty useful”, etc. About 40% of comments are hesitant or critical. Some of these comments include:

I attended a few workshops. They were ok, but haven’t helped me much.

The training that I attended did not help me in my teaching.

I have mixed feelings. The content of some sessions was of no relevance to my teaching but these events were more of a social occasion. It always makes me feel better when I meet other teachers, we finally have time to talk, have a cup of coffee together, it turns out we have similar experiences, similar problems... In this way formal training helps me but in a different way than it was intended.

4.4.5. Knowledge of ESP methodology

The statement that the role of ESP teacher is different than the role of general English teacher is supported by 57% and contradicted by 11% of study subjects (32% refrain from taking a definitive stance). That the specifics of ESP methodology differ from general ELT methodology is supported by 40%

of respondents and contradicted by 20% (the remaining 40% neither agree, nor disagree with this statement). As many as 44% of informants feel the need to improve their knowledge of ESP methodology, 16% do not articulate such a need, while 40% put themselves in the middle of the continuum. When asked if they attended any formal training designed to develop their knowledge of ESP methodology (in the form of seminar, workshop, conference, tuition, etc.) in the course of the last year, 34% gave a positive and 66% a negative answer. Those who attended enumerated the number of up to 5 events (the average being 2). When asked about attending ESP methodology-related events in the course of the last five years, 53% answered positively and 47% negatively. This time, the number of these events was up to 20 (in one case), with the average of 3. According to respondents, the quality of formal training on ESP methodology that they took part in varied. Some comments (about 60%) were highly positive, for example:

Most of them were useful and inspirational.

It was really interesting and task-oriented.

Some responses expressed more moderate feelings, for instance:

It was stimulating; I wish it were more relevant to my particular fields of study though.

I was rather satisfied.

Only to some extent.

They usually promoted new textbooks.

Some comments were critical, as in the following quotations:

The formal training that I attended did not answer the needs of an ESP teacher.

Often not useful, irrelevant to my experience.

When asked what kind of formal training (in the form of seminar, workshop, conference, tuition, language course, etc.) they would like to attend, respondents give answers as presented in the following Figure 4:

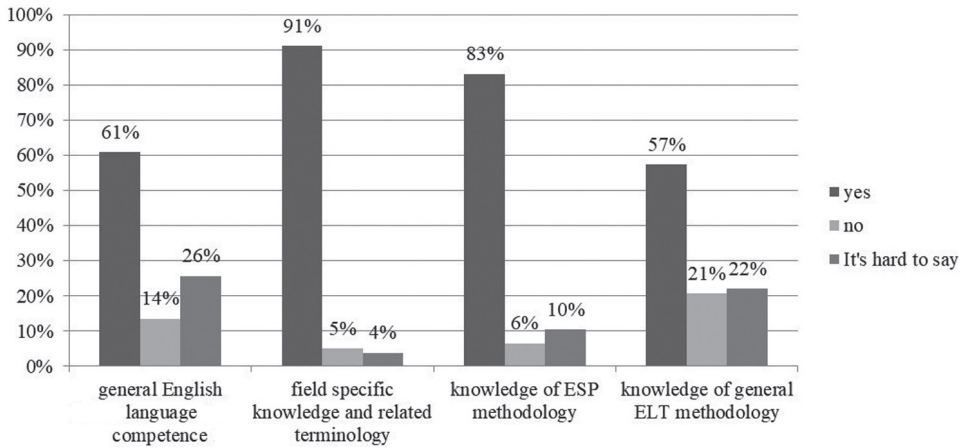


Figure 4. Types of formal training ESP teachers would like to attend in the future

Source: Authors' own research

Asked about whether they feel they have a lot of opportunities for the development, with regard to formal training, respondents provided the following answers, as presented in Figure 5:

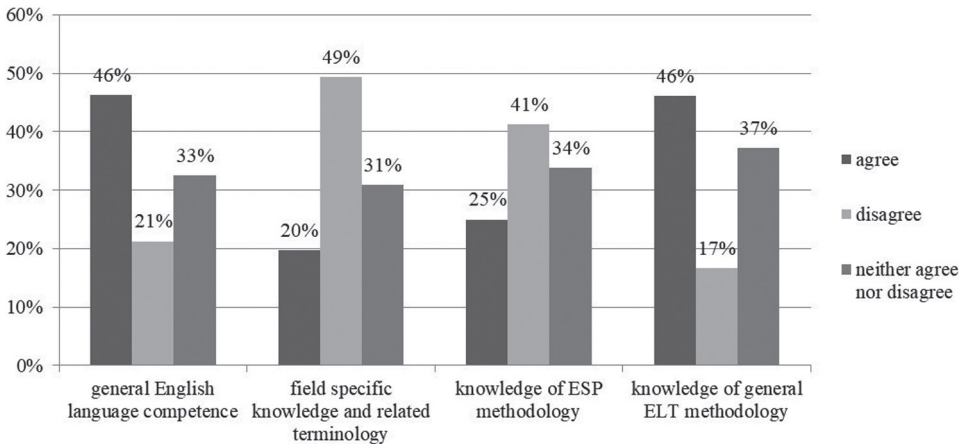


Figure 5. Areas of formal training where ESP teachers recognise development opportunities

Source: Authors' own research

Respondents were also asked if they would like the institution they are employed in to provide formal training as a regular routine at work. Participants of the study provided the following answers, as presented in Figure 6:

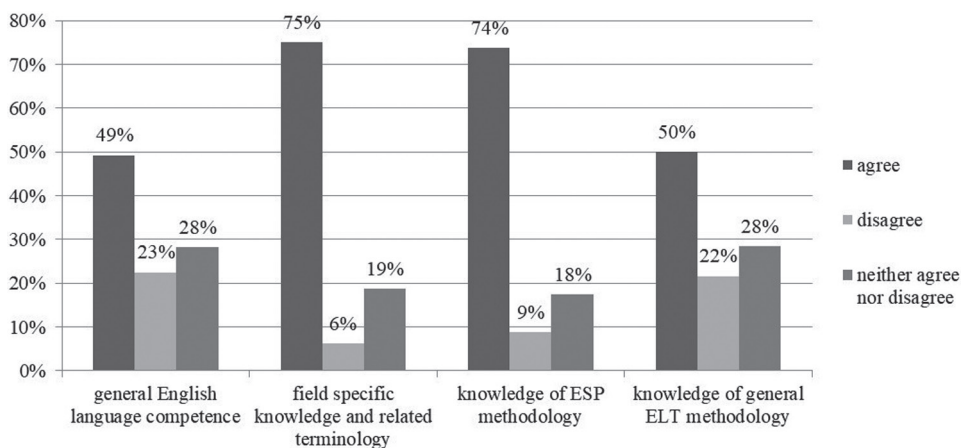


Figure 6. Areas of formal training ESP teachers would like to be provided with by their workplace institution

Source: Authors' own research

5. Discussion

A definite majority of collected opinions reflect the view of Pettis (2002: 395) that “[d]evelopment of teaching competence is our professional responsibility” (cf. Section 2 of this article). Despite their considerable experience as ESP teachers (mean average 17 years), over 90% of respondents recognise professional development as an indispensable part of ESP teacher practice (“Academic teacher needs to improve his/her competence all the time”). Further, more than 80% of the sample acknowledged the relevance and value of formal teacher training (i.e., attending courses, seminars, workshops or conferences). This outcome is congruent with what we found in our previous study (SZYMAŃSKA-TWOREK and MAKOWSKA-SONGIN 2017) conducted among EMP teachers: in both cases it was determined that ESP teachers are willing to devote their time and energy to sustained professional development. In addition, it is worth stating, again echoing the results of our previous research, that more than half of respondents claimed not to be prepared well enough for the ESP teacher profession by their initial teacher education, which only underlines the importance of in-service training.

The four areas of professional development we investigated include: general English language competence, field-specific knowledge and related terminology, knowledge of general ELT methodology and of ESP methodology. Although all of them were mentioned by participants as areas worthy of attention,

the needs for professional improvement of our respondents are concentrated on areas directly connected with ESP instruction: 74% of respondents want to enhance their knowledge of subject matter and 49% want to enhance their skills for teaching ESP. Similarly, although respondents expressed the need to participate in formal training devoted to all areas of professional development listed above, particular interest was directed to training opportunities related to subject expertise and ESP methodology. When asked about the evaluation of their English language competence, 63% of respondents claimed it has generally improved since they started to work as a teacher (cf. Section 3.1 of this article on language attrition). Only 7% of the sample admitted it has deteriorated since then. This result may partially explain a relatively modest interest of our respondents in training related to general English competence. Another possible interpretation could be the fact that our respondents represent a group of academic educators, who most often teach English courses above the B1 level in CEFR scale (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), while language attrition touches mostly those working with low-level students.

Training in general ELT methodology also generated less interest than the one related to ESP methodology. It might be explained by the fact that respondents complained about the lack of ESP-related topics in their own initial tertiary education, while they were rather satisfied with their ELT teaching competence and previously received education in this regard (“My educational training was great in terms of teaching EFL but teaching ESP requires expertise knowledge regardless of the language so I need to study and research the field itself before I teach it in English”). Paradoxically, training in general ELT methodology is the one respondents most often take part in. In the course of the last year, as many as 63% of study subjects participated in this type of training (for comparison, statistics on different types of training are as follows: general English language competence – 44%, field specific knowledge and related terminology – 32%, ESP methodology – 34%). The results pertaining to a longer period of time are similar. In the course of the last five years, as many as 74% of study subjects attended training on general ELT methodology (for comparison, training on general English language competence – 49%, field-specific knowledge and related terminology – 43%, ESP methodology – 53%). Also, the number of events respondents attended was highest in the case of general ELT methodology. In the course of the last five years respondents attended on average 7 such events (statistics on different types of training are as follows: general English language competence – 4, field-specific knowledge and related terminology – 3, ESP methodology – 3). These findings suggest that training on general ELT methodology is far more available than different types of training. Our respondents seem to be satisfied with their knowledge on ELT teaching and in marked need for more specialist training.

Another issue worth discussing are the obstacles respondents encounter while trying to advance in the areas mentioned above. Firstly, one ought to mention the complexity and intricacy of the subject to be taught (“the area is too wide”, “[t]he amount and complexity of knowledge”, “a total lack of knowledge associated with Engineering”). Respondents often complain about their shortcomings related to specialist knowledge, which explains their strong interest in training in this respect. This problem is even more aggravated in the case of respondents who teach at a few faculties as developing specialist knowledge in a number of directions at the same time is a daunting, if not impossible, challenge (“I’d have to develop in a few different directions simultaneously”). Secondly, ESP teachers complain about the scarcity or a complete lack of training that would directly answer their ESP-related needs. Respondents mention limited possibilities they have to participate in formal in-service training and sometimes question the quality of what is available to them. Unsurprisingly then, 75% of respondents would like the institutions they are employed in to provide them with training in the area of field-specific knowledge and related terminology as a regular routine at work. Similarly, 74% of respondents would like their employers to provide them with regular training on ESP methodology (for comparison, 49% express a wish for their employers to provide training on general English language competence, 50% express the same wish for training on general ELT methodology). This result resonates with our previous study, where 75% of the sample claimed that the number of training opportunities for ESP teachers in Poland is not sufficient.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed at examining the needs and expectations of academic ESP teachers toward professional development in the context of Polish tertiary education. Quantitative and qualitative data gained from the answers and comments provided by 82 respondents representing 11 randomly chosen institutions of tertiary education in Poland was analysed and described. The results of the present study are to a large extent consistent with the wider literature on the subject. The main themes emerging from our study are: respondents’ strong interest in professional development, focus on skills specifically related to ESP in favour of those of EGP, lack of satisfaction with regard to availability, relevance and quality of formal in-service training, especially the one in the area of ESP. Further, it was also observed that ESP teachers often mentioned their lack of specialist knowledge as a long-standing, daunting problem.

Concluding, it may be strongly confirmed that ESP teachers need and expect formal assistance related to their everyday teaching practice and often would gladly welcome such opportunity if provided by their employers. Bearing in mind existing organizational limitations, we would advocate that language departments/institutions of tertiary education in Poland consider greater support of ESP teachers, especially by providing them with opportunities to take part in formal in-service training that is strictly tailored to their ESP-related needs. Importantly, as reported by one of the respondents, some language departments have already brought this idea to life: “We organize training sessions (meetings devoted to teaching field-specific knowledge) in our Centre on a regular basis.”

The last issue we want to signal here is the question of whether ESP-related topics should not constitute a more important part of pre-service teacher training curriculum. As stated by one of the respondents: “The area of my academic curriculum never corresponded to my future needs and demands.” This leaves a wide area for further consideration on the content and quality of education of ESP teachers-to-be, which after all is subsequently reflected in the quality of academic language education in Poland.

Concluding this article, we would like to observe that despite various obstacles they face during their daily practice as ESP teachers, our respondents seem highly devoted to their profession and at the same time fully aware of the necessity for continuous development; a sentiment which is perfectly summarised in a statement by one of the respondents: “[t]here is ALWAYS something you can improve. Teachers learn all their life.”

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Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

Dear Teachers!

This questionnaire asks about your needs and expectations concerning professional development as an ESP teacher. It concerns four areas:

- general English language competence,
- field specific knowledge and related terminology (= your students' specialism),
- knowledge of ESP methodology,
- knowledge of general ELT methodology.

Under each question there is a rubric "Comment". It is optional, however all of your remarks and explanations are highly welcome. Thank you very much for your help!

ESP – English for Specific Purposes

ELT English Language Teaching

1. Professional development is important to me.
strongly disagree 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 strongly agree
2. My initial educational training as a linguist/teacher was not enough to prepare me well for my current profession as an ESP practitioner.
strongly disagree 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 strongly agree
3. Which form of professional development do you find most useful? (you can choose more than one option)
 - attending courses, seminars, workshops or conferences
 - studying literature and online sources
 - consulting other teachers
 - consulting subject specialists
 - reflective teaching
 - doing research in the classroom (teacher research)
 - taking on new roles, e.g. becoming a materials writer or a teacher mentor
 - other

If other, please specify:

4. Which form of professional development do you spend most time on? (you can choose more than one option)
- attending courses, seminars, workshops or conferences
 - studying literature and online sources
 - consulting other teachers
 - consulting subject specialists
 - reflective teaching
 - doing research in the classroom (teacher research)
 - taking on new roles, e.g. becoming a materials writer or a teacher mentor
 - other
 - I do not devote time to professional development.

If other, please specify:

5. Which area of professional competence do you feel you need to improve? (you can choose more than one option)
- general English language competence
 - field specific knowledge and related terminology
 - knowledge of ESP methodology
 - knowledge of general ELT methodology
 - other
 - none

If other, please specify:

Professional development – general English language competence

6. I feel the need to improve my general English language competence.
strongly disagree 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 strongly agree
7. Since I started to work as a teacher, my general English language competence has:
- generally improved
 - generally deteriorated
 - in some areas improved, and in others deteriorated
 - it's hard to say

If “in some areas improved, and in others deteriorated”, please specify:

8. In the last year, have you attended any formal training designed to improve your general English language competence (in the form of language course, workshop, tuition, etc.)?
- yes
 - no

If yes, how many:

9. In the last five years, have you attended any formal training designed to improve your general English language competence (in the form of language course, workshop, tuition, etc.)?

– yes

– no

If yes, how many:

10. If you attended any formal training designed to improve your general English language competence in the last five years, how do you assess its quality? Was the training useful for you and relevant to your experience?

Professional development – field specific knowledge and related terminology (= your students' specialism)

11. I feel the need to improve my knowledge about my students' specialism and related terminology.

strongly disagree 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 strongly agree

12. What problems do you encounter while trying to develop professionally in the area of field specific knowledge and related terminology?

13. In the last year, have you attended any formal training designed to develop your field specific knowledge and related terminology (in the form of language course, workshop, tuition, etc.)?

– yes

– no

If yes, how many:

14. In the last five years, have you attended any formal training designed to develop your field specific knowledge and related terminology (in the form of language course, workshop, tuition, etc.)?

– yes

– no

If yes, how many:

15. If you attended any formal training designed to develop your field specific knowledge and related terminology in the last five years, how do you assess its quality? Was the training useful for you and relevant to your experience?

Professional development – knowledge of ESP methodology

16. The role of ESP teacher is different than the role of general English teacher.

strongly disagree 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 strongly agree

17. The specifics of ESP methodology differ from general ELT methodology.

strongly disagree 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 strongly agree

18. I feel the need to improve my knowledge of ESP methodology.

strongly disagree 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 strongly agree

19. In the last year, have you attended any formal training designed to develop your knowledge of ESP methodology (in the form of seminar, workshop, conference, tuition, etc.)?

– yes

– no

If yes, how many:

20. In the last five years, have you attended any formal training designed to develop your knowledge of ESP methodology (in the form of seminar, workshop, conference, tuition, etc.)?

– yes

– no

If yes, how many:

21. If you attended any formal training designed to develop your knowledge of ESP methodology in the last five years, how do you assess its quality? Was the training useful for you and relevant to your experience?

Professional development – knowledge of general ELT methodology

22. I feel the need to improve my knowledge of general ELT methodology.
strongly disagree 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 strongly agree

23. In the last year, have you attended any formal training designed to develop your knowledge of general ELT methodology (in the form of seminar, workshop, conference, tuition, etc.)?

– yes

– no

If yes, how many:

24. In the last five years, have you attended any formal training designed to develop your knowledge of general ELT methodology (in the form of seminar, workshop, conference, tuition, etc.)?

– yes

– no

If yes, how many:

25. If you attended any formal training designed to develop your knowledge of general ELT methodology in the last five years, how do you assess its quality? Was the training useful for you and relevant to your experience?

26. In the future, I would like to attend some kind of formal training (in the form of seminar, workshop, conference, tuition, language course, etc.) designed to develop the following areas:

x	yes	no	It's hard to say
general English language competence			
field specific knowledge and related terminology			
ESP methodology			
ELT methodology			

27. With regard to formal training, I feel I have a lot of opportunities for the development in the following areas:

x	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree, nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
general English language competence					
field specific knowledge and related terminology					
ESP methodology					
ELT methodology					

28. I would like the institution I am employed in to provide training in the following areas as a regular routine at my work.

x	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree, nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
general English language competence					
field specific knowledge and related terminology					
ESP methodology					
ELT methodology					

29. Are there any other problems/needs/ideas related to your professional development that you would like to comment on?

30. For how many years have you worked as an ESP teacher?

31. Have you taught general English before you started teaching ESP?

– yes

– no

32. Do you currently also work as an ELT teacher?

– yes

– no

33. Where do you teach ESP? (please write the name of the institution)

34. Which faculties do you teach?

35. I am:

– female

– male

Rozwój zawodowy nauczyciela warunkiem jakości w edukacji:
potrzeby i oczekiwania nauczycieli języka angielskiego specjalistycznego dotyczące
rozwoju zawodowego w kontekście edukacji wyższej w Polsce

Streszczenie: W niniejszym artykule omówione zostały potrzeby i oczekiwania nauczycieli języka angielskiego specjalistycznego dotyczące rozwoju zawodowego w kontekście edukacji wyższej w Polsce. Jakościowy i ilościowy materiał badawczy stanowiły odpowiedzi i komentarze 82 respondentów reprezentujących uczelnie wyższe w Polsce. Nauczyciele języka angielskiego specjalistycznego odpowiadali na pytania dotyczące swoich doświadczeń i oczekiwań w zakresie rozwoju zawodowego w ramach czterech obszarów: kompetencji językowej, wiedzy specjalistycznej, znajomości metodyki nauczania języków obcych w zakresie ogólnym oraz znajomości metodyki nauczania języków specjalistycznych. Wyniki niniejszego badania są w dużym stopniu zgodne z wynikami przedstawianymi w literaturze przedmiotu. Najważniejsze wątki, które pojawiły się w badaniu, to: znaczące zainteresowanie respondentów rozwojem zawodowym, ukierunkowanie zainteresowania na obszar związany z nauczaniem języka specjalistycznego, niezadowolenie dotyczące dostępności i jakości szkoleń, w szczególności związanych z nauczaniem języka angielskiego specjalistycznego. Ponadto zauważono, że wielu nauczycieli zmaga się z problemem braku wiedzy specjalistycznej. Wnioski płynące z badania wskazują, że nauczycielom języka angielskiego specjalistycznego potrzebne jest formalne wsparcie w postaci szkoleń związane z codzienną praktyką zawodową.

Słowa kluczowe: język angielski specjalistyczny, rozwój zawodowy nauczycieli, szkolenia