Are We Really Teaching English for Specific Purposes, or Basic English Skills? The Cases of Turkey and Latvia

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Abstract English for specific purposes (ESP) has evolved as an important sub-field of English language education to meet the career-related needs of non-native speakers of English in a wide variety of contexts. As such, ESP instruction in specialized subject areas ranging from vocational (e.g., tourism and hospitality) to professional (e.g., international law or banking) to academic (e.g., thesis and dissertation writing) is often integrated in the training and degree programs offered at higher education institutions. However, the ability of these institutions to provide adequate ESP instruction has often been called into question, with critics indicating that insufficient resources and planning, lack of teacher preparedness, and low motivation of students result in courses that cover little more than basic language skills. With these concerns in mind, the researchers carried out the present study to examine the circumstances at two state-run universities in Turkey and Latvia, calling on 12 ESP instructors to describe their views in terms of their institutional environment, their level of training and preparedness, and their individual efforts to overcome the challenges they faced in their practice. The results demonstrate that institutional problems (e.g., poor planning and management and overcrowded classrooms), students' lack of basic English skills, limited access to specialized teacher training and difficulties with subject-area terminology created obstacles to carrying out more than basic English instruction. In light of the results, some recommendations are offered with respect to program design, teacher training and teacher motivation.

Keywords Business English · English for Academic Purposes · English language teaching · ESP · ESP teacher training · Professional English

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1 Introduction

The status of English as a global language has been firmly established, and it is well known that English as a foreign or second language is a core aspect of education in the majority of countries where it is not spoken as learners' mother tongue. In most educational settings where English is taught, the aim is to provide students with a foundation of general language skills that will – in theory, at least – allow them easy access to a world in which English is viewed as a key to success. Yet, as Bracaj (2014) points out, education in general English may often be *too* general. On the one hand, English is emphasized as the language of international politics, trade, technology, scientific research, and so on – all areas that point to very specific language needs. On the other hand, English language teaching programs typically address a very broad range of skills, leaving learners with basic knowledge about its lexis and grammar, as well as the ability to communicate in a variety of common situations… but without the high-level skills that would support the complex, specialized interactions that take place in any of these spheres.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as a sub-field of English language education, has evolved precisely to address this concern (Hyland 2007). As Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) explain, the role of ESP is to: (1) meet the needs of a group of learners who require English skills related to a specific non-language discipline (e.g., business, law, medicine, academics, and so on); (2) make use of the underlying methodologies and activities of the discipline it serves; and (3) center on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of the grammar, lexis, register and discourse related to that discipline (Dudley-Evans & St. John, pp. 4–5). In addition to these "absolute" features that are considered as indispensable to ESP, several optional or "variable" characteristics have also been suggested; for instance, that ESP learners are typically adults, and that they generally have at least some level of background knowledge in English.

Ideally, when properly implemented, these need-oriented characteristics should enable ESP learners to acquire the specialized language skills necessary to discuss the interests of shareholders in the boardroom; or engage meaningfully with peers at an international educational conference; or explain the features of a new technological tool to a potential investor. In many instances, courses in ESP may indeed provide these benefits, in line with Hyland's support for the field as a dynamic and thriving aspect of English language education. However, in one of the contexts in which ESP courses are most frequently implemented – institutions of higher learning – these expectations often fall far short of reality (Chen 2011; Hoa and Mai 2016; Suzani et al. 2011; Ünal 2014).

1.1   Challenges in Implementing ESP in Higher Education

Higher education institutions in non-English speaking countries commonly offer instruction in English for specific purposes in consideration of students' expected language needs (Bracaj 2014); whether vocational (e.g., a career in tourism and hospitality); professional (e.g., international banking); or academic (e.g., educational research) (Charles 2013; Thompson 2013). In some cases, these courses may deliver on their intent; however, extensive problems related to student motivation and performance, lack of appropriate materials, issues with teacher quality, program design and other institutional factors are often seen as major constraints in the successful delivery of ESP instruction in universities and professional schools (Chen 2011; Flowerdew 2012; Hoa and Mai 2016; Suzani et al. 2011; Ünal 2014). The ability of teachers to incorporate the teaching of language skills with instruction in subject-area content has also been raised as a concern (Fujimoko-Adamson and Adamson 2017).

Problems Related to Student Motivation and Performance In spite of the high level of importance placed on English language learning, not all students have internalized the connection between English ability and success in their future careers. Often, they may feel that there is little chance they will ever use their language skills outside of the classroom; and thus, language-related courses may be seen as a burden, rather than an opportunity (Hoa and Mai 2016). In addition, Hoa and Mai (2016) note that in contexts such as Vietnam, students who are enrolled in ESP courses often lack basic English skills and are simply not ready for language instruction in their area of specialization. Ünal (2014) similarly points out that in ESP classes in Turkish higher education, learners typically come from a range of different language learning backgrounds and experiences. As such, students who have not studied English for years may be enrolled in a language course alongside students who possess a high level of proficiency. Under these circumstances, lower-level students may become frustrated and anxious, while high-performing students may be bored and undermotivated; and teachers may struggle to balance the disparate needs of learners in their lesson planning.

Furthermore, traditional teacher-fronted instructional practices, often the norm in EFL contexts, are seen as contributing to poor learner engagement (Mačianskienė and Bijeikienė 2017). Soruç et al. (2017) point to an additional concern relating to traditional instructional practices, noting that learners themselves are often accustomed to teacher-centered instruction and lack the autonomy and self-motivation needed to master complex language skills in an ESP setting.

Lack of Appropriate Materials Successful teaching of English relies, in part, on the availability of appropriate teaching tools. However, learning materials such as English teaching texts that address a specific subject area can be difficult to find in many ESP contexts (Hoa and Mai 2016). In such cases, it is not unusual for teachers to employ basic English teaching texts that cover general grammar and vocabulary

topics (Hoa and Mai 2016; Maruyama 1996), rather than materials that are specific to their learners' subject area; and to focus their instruction accordingly.

Issues with Teacher Quality A perennial concern in all aspects of English as a foreign language education is that of teacher quality (Çelik Submitted; Özer 2005; Özmusul 2011), and ESP is no exception. Inadequate teacher training, lack of meaningful professional development opportunities, low pay, and heavy workloads have often been cited as contributing to this ongoing problem (Büyükkantarcıoğlu 2004; DeVillar and Jiang 2006; Kızıldağ 2009). These issues are further complicated in ESP settings, where instructors ideally require not only the pedagogical knowledge and practical skills to teach English as a foreign language, but also a working knowledge of the subject area in question. Individuals who possess all of these characteristics to a sufficient degree are rare, and as such, it is often the case that the instructors assigned to teach ESP courses are either English specialists who have little knowledge of the given subject area; or subject area teachers who know some English but who have not been trained in the teaching of foreign languages; or individuals who speak English but are generally inexperienced in teaching and are not aware of the appropriate methods for delivering ESP instruction (Hoa and Mai 2016).

Institutional Factors Aside from shortages of qualified instructors, which may lead to under-prepared individuals being appointed to teaching positions, a number of other factors may pose significant challenges to the successful implementation of ESP on an institutional level. Inadequate planning or poor understanding of the resources needed may result in problems such as lack of a coherent curriculum (Chen 2011; Gatehouse 2001); inconsistency in the level of quality from one course to another (or even in the same course taught at different times); insufficient time allotted for ESP courses (Ünal 2014); and overly crowded classrooms (Suzani et al. 2011).

2 How ESP Is Carried Out in Higher Education: Examples from Turkey and Latvia

With these general concerns in mind, it is worth taking a closer look at how ESP instruction is carried out in real-life educational contexts. For this purpose, we will focus on the cases of Turkey and Latvia, two countries that are very different in terms of their history, political structure and culture, but in which English language education plays an important role. In order to clarify the approach to English instruction in each country, some general information on the educational frameworks is given, particularly with reference to higher education. Afterward, the implementation of ESP is described.

2.1   Turkey's Case: The Status of English in Turkish National Education

In the Republic of Turkey, instruction in English as a foreign language (EFL) has been included in the formal educational process for decades; particularly since the end of the Second World War and the formation of the NATO Alliance, of which Turkey is a member. Beginning in the 1950s, English was established as a mandatory subject at the secondary level (Kırkgöz 2007), both for high school students preparing for university education and for students learning a trade or profession in vocational schools. However, due to widespread inconsistencies in the content that was taught, the materials used, the number of hours of instruction, and issues with teacher quality, large numbers of learners struggled to achieve an adequate level of proficiency.

Given the growing implications of English in terms of the country's economic and sociopolitical success in a globalizing world, this concern – along with other systemic problems – led the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) to institute a major reform of the public education process. Part of this restructuring, which was put into effect in 1997, included the addition of English as a compulsory subject for all students from elementary school onward. Learners were now required to attend EFL courses starting in the 4th grade, continuing until their graduation from high school in the 12th grade (Kırkgöz 2007, 2009; Kırkgöz et al. 2016). At the same time, a new curriculum, based on a communicative model, was adopted for implementation in all schools in order to maintain consistency of instruction (Kırkgöz 2007, 2009).

With these measures, it was expected that the overall English language proficiency of Turkey's students would improve. However, ongoing deficiencies in learner outcomes have prompted further attempts at reform: once, in 2005, with a revision of the EFL curriculum; and again, in 2012, with another major overhaul of elementary and secondary education. This most recent, comprehensive action had a particularly significant impact on the way that English language instruction is delivered, as the age for beginning formal schooling was decreased from 6–6½ years to 5–5½ years, and at the same time, the starting point for compulsory English learning was lowered from the 4th grade to the 2nd grade of elementary school. The net result is that Turkish children now begin learning English at the age of 6–6½ years; and they continue to receive EFL instruction until graduating from high school (Kırkgöz et al. 2016). Afterward, students who elect to continue their education may enter a 2-year vocational school – a tertiary-level institution where they are prepared for work in a trade or profession (e.g., nursing, tourism and hospitality, business, and so on); or they may enroll in a 4-year bachelor's degree program. In either case, they continue to receive instruction in English throughout their training or studies.

Where ESP Fits In   At the elementary and high school levels, students follow the English language curriculum prescribed by the Ministry of National Education (Kırkgöz 2007; Kırkgöz et al. 2016). However, at the tertiary level, English

instruction varies according to program type and field of study. As outlined in the British Council's's (2015) report on the status of English in higher education in Turkey, 4-year university programs may be administered through either English-medium or Turkish-medium instruction (EMI or TMI, respectively). Students who are entering an EMI program are required to take a standardized English achievement test. Those who do not achieve a satisfactory score are required to attend what is known as a preparatory year, during which they receive intensive instruction in basic English skills prior to beginning their regular program of study. Then, throughout the remainder of their undergraduate term, their coursework is conducted with English as the medium of instruction. At the same time, they may continue to receive direct instruction in English through ESP courses that are aligned with their intended careers (e.g., psychology, medicine, law, engineering, and so on). Students enrolled in TMI bachelor's degree programs receive instruction in the Turkish language. However, they may choose to take ESP courses as electives within their discipline, since English skills are viewed as essential in virtually every field. Students in 2-year vocational programs may likewise enroll in ESP courses specific to their intended trade or profession (British Council 2015).

Who Teaches English as a Foreign Language in Turkey? English courses in elementary- and secondary-level Turkish schools are generally taught either by teachers who have successfully completed a 4-year English language teaching program (Karakaş 2012) or by graduates of other English-related fields (e.g., English Language and Literature, among others) who have obtained a pedagogical teacher education certificate. In higher education, teachers of English as a foreign language may also possess one or the other of these qualifications, but this is not required; anyone who holds a degree in an English-related field may become an English lecturer, whether or not he or she has training or experience in teaching.

The English Language Teacher Training Process As Karakaş (2012) notes, the majority of English language teachers in Turkey receive their training through 4-year teacher preparation programs administered by university faculties of education. All teacher candidates within a particular program follow a similar curriculum. There is no differentiation based on the type of courses they will eventually teach, whether general English, English for specific purposes, or otherwise. Nor is there any variance according to whether candidates will teach at the elementary, secondary or higher education level. Furthermore, there is a high degree of uniformity in English teacher training from one university to the next, as Turkish universities are centrally controlled by the Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu (Council of Higher Education, or CoHE), (CoHE 2014; Yüksel 2012), which specifies requirements for teacher training programs.

Under CoHE oversight, individual teacher education departments do have some latitude in terms of structuring their courses; the content and materials may vary depending on the department and the discretion of individual instructors; and all programs are required to offer electives constituting a minimum of 25% of their courses. However, as Karakaş (2012) explains, all prospective teachers are expected to complete certain core requirements. For instance, first-year students solidify their

English language content knowledge and skills through courses such as Contextual Grammar, Advanced Reading and Writing, and Listening and Pronunciation. Then, in their second, third and fourth years, they take pedagogical content knowledge courses such as Approaches in English Language Teaching, Instructional Technologies and Materials Design, Specialized Teaching Methods, Foreign Language Teaching for Children, and so on. The final year of study additionally emphasizes field experiences, with students observing EFL classes in cooperating local schools, as well as planning and teaching their own lessons. Throughout the 4-year term, students also receive instruction in general pedagogical subjects that may include educational psychology, educational science, and classroom management. These courses involve application, as well as theory (Coşgun-Ögeyik 2009), giving pre-service teachers the opportunity to practice the related skills in a controlled environment (e.g., preparing lesson plans and learning materials and performing microteachings). Other required subjects that are not related to teaching include Turkish history courses such as Atatürk's Principles and the History of the Turkish Revolution, as well as Turkish Written Expression and Turkish Oral Expression (Altmışdört 2016). Aside from these core courses, various electives relating to culture, additional foreign languages, reflective teaching, academic research, and others, may also be included at the discretion of individual university programs.

A second path to teacher candidacy, as previously mentioned, consists of pedagogical certification for graduates of 4-year degree programs other than English Language Teacher Education – typically English Languages and Literatures. In this case, individuals who have completed a 4-year degree may enroll in a teacher certification course in which they receive intensive instruction in the pedagogical aspects of language teaching. This is ordinarily a two-semester program consisting of eight courses, comprising (1) general education subjects such as Instructional Principles and Techniques, Educational Psychology, Assessment and Evaluation, Educational Program Development, and so on; and (2) English language teaching subjects such as Specialized Teaching Methods, as well as a practicum course.

Whether prospective teachers pursue a 4-year degree in English language teaching or pedagogical certification, the focus of these programs is on general English language instruction. Specialized training or coursework in English for Specific Purposes is not widely available; there is a general assumption that knowing how to teach English is enough, and little consideration has historically been given to the need for specialization within the field (Ünal 2014).

Certification and Job Placement For candidates who are planning to teach in a state-run elementary or secondary school, completion of a teacher education or certificate program is the first step in the process. Afterward, they are required to take a civil service exam, as they will become government workers. In addition, they take a subject area test in teaching. The scores of these exams are used by the Ministry of National Education in determining job placement. Candidates are appointed to their positions by the Ministry, rather than applying directly to schools (Yüksel 2012). On the other hand, teacher candidates who are not appointed by the MoNE

may apply directly to individual schools; but they are hired on a temporary basis and do not receive the same pay or benefits as an appointed teacher (Çelik Submitted; Yüksel 2012).

At the higher education level, institutions recruit their own English lecturers, and candidates may apply to them directly. Criteria for employment are established by the individual programs/departments. While a bachelor's degree is typically a prerequisite, there is usually no requirement that a prospective language teacher have training or experience in teaching. Furthermore, in terms of ESP courses, the main criterion for employment is English ability, rather than pedagogical knowledge concerning ESP teaching or even content area knowledge in the related subject area (Ünal 2014). The net result is that – for example – students in a faculty of medicine may receive ESP instruction from a lecturer who knows how to speak English, but has no background knowledge concerning the medical field, including the related terminology and communicative norms.

Professional Development for Turkish Teachers of EFL Once English teachers have been appointed to an elementary or secondary level position, the primary avenue for professional development is through periodic training workshops that are provided by the MoNE (Daloğlu 2004; Çelik Submitted). These workshops often consist of standardized content that is not tailored to the specific needs of the teachers who attend them; as such, they are largely viewed as ineffective, and teachers frequently view them as having little impact on their practice (Çelik 2016; Çelik Submitted). Currently, there are no professional development requirements for EFL lecturers at the higher education level.

2.2   Latvia's Case: The Changing Roles of Foreign Languages and the Growing Importance of English

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, drastic alterations were made in both language policy and language practice in many post-Soviet countries. In Latvia, these changes have been especially impacted by the complex historical developments of the second half of the twentieth century, with the official national language being challenged by the spread of minority languages (Druviete 1997, 1999, 2000). Furthermore, while the Russian language continues to hold important status in post-Soviet Latvia, the process of globalization and the resulting spread of English as the lingua franca in many professional fields have led to English taking on an increasingly prominent role. Thus, instruction in English as a foreign language is now mandatory for all Latvian students (Stavicka 2015).

English Language Education in Latvia At the elementary and high school levels, students follow the compulsory EFL curriculum prescribed by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia. Students continuing their education at the tertiary level may enroll in university programs offering academic and

professional degrees; or in non-university professional programs (Regulations on State Standard of Academic Higher Education – Cabinet Regulation No 2, adopted January 3, 2002). In the majority of these, the Latvian language is the dominant medium of instruction. Some institutions (not funded by the state) offer Russian-medium programs that are attractive not only to Latvian residents, but also to students from other post-Soviet countries, as well as from Russia itself (Stavicka 2015). On the other hand, most state-run institutions offer English-medium degree programs in specified academic and professional domains; and some individual subject area courses also use English as the medium of instruction.

Aside from its role as a medium of instruction in higher education, English may also be taught as a foreign language. Additionally, students must demonstrate a certain level of proficiency in English as an entrance requirement to most programs of study. While proficiency levels are established on the basis of exam result scores, as well as the CEFR proficiency levels of candidates, the minimum requirements are set by individual institutions, rather than by national mandate. Furthermore, while English proficiency is considered as one criterion for university admission, the general practice is to admit students to degree programs through a competitive process. This frequently leads to mixed-ability classrooms, where students have very different levels of proficiency in the subjects in question (including English).

The Role of English for Specific Purposes As concerns the provision of ESP, Latvian higher education institutions offer both mandatory and elective English language courses in line with the fields of study, in addition to extracurricular language courses. However, none of the institutions examined for the purposes of this study offer mandatory courses in academic writing (excluding specialized language programs). This could be viewed as a serious challenge for students at all levels (e.g., undergraduate, masters and PhD) and in all disciplines, as they are generally required to write a research paper as a condition for graduation (Stavicka 2015).

Who Teaches English as A Foreign Language in Latvia? English courses in elementary- and secondary-level Latvian schools are generally delivered by teachers who are either enrolled in or have successfully completed a 4-year English language teaching program; or by students and graduates of other English-related fields (e.g., English Philology) who have obtained a pedagogical teacher education certificate. At the tertiary level, as with Turkey's case, lecturers in English as a foreign language may also possess one or the other of these qualifications, but this is not a requirement for a teaching career within the higher education sector; anyone who holds a degree in an English-related field may become an English lecturer (Regulations of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia, Nr 662, 2014).

The English Language Teacher Training Process The majority of English language teachers in Latvia are awarded the necessary qualification through either a 4-year teacher education program; a master's study program; or an in-service training course for teachers with qualifications in other subject areas (https://www.

european-agency.org/country-information/latvia/national-overview/teacher-train-ing-basic-and-specialist-teacher-training). These programs are generally adminis-tered by university faculties of education. The curriculum for teacher education programs is designed by individual university faculties and confirmed by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia. Teacher training comprises several components, including general education courses; content-area courses; and professional courses. Whether prospective teachers are pursuing a 4-year degree in English language teaching or pedagogical certification, the focus of these programs is on general English language instruction; teacher education curricula do not differentiate in terms of the types of English that candidates might teach (e.g., General English, ESP, and so on). However, in certain instances, such as the program administered by the University of Latvia's Faculty of Education, courses in ESP teaching methodologies for the subjects of Psychology and Art may be offered (Regulations of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia, Nr 662, 2014).

3   Rationale for the Study

Given the standing of English as an international language, students who have not mastered a satisfactory level of English proficiency are at a clear disadvantage. Therefore, it is the responsibility of higher education institutions to build on the basic skills that have been acquired at the elementary and secondary levels, allowing stu-dents to achieve the degree of mastery needed to thrive as future world citizens. On the other hand, the researchers – who are all professionals in the field of English as a for-eign language – are well aware of the previously-outlined challenges that exist in car-rying out effective ESP instruction. With this in mind, they felt that an in-depth examination of the status of ESP teaching at their respective universities was warranted in order to pinpoint the problem areas and suggest areas that need improvement.

In considering how best to pursue such an examination, the researchers deter-mined that course instructors, as the individuals immediately responsible for the implementation of ESP, might have the most direct insight concerning their own teaching ability, the institutional environment, and other issues that may impact the quality of ESP instruction. Furthermore, the researchers believed that investigating the situation from the perspectives of their separate educational contexts, and then examining the similarities and differences between them in terms of what works and what does not, might allow for an additional level of understanding. With this in mind, the following research questions formed the basis for this study:

1. How do ESP instructors characterize their general teaching environment, and how do they feel it impacts the teaching of English to non-English major students?
2. What skills do ESP teachers feel are required for teaching English for specific purposes, particularly within in their subject area?

3. Do they believe they have the necessary skills to teach English effectively in their subject area? How did they acquire these skills?
4. What challenges do they face in their teaching, and what steps (if any) do they take to overcome them?

4 Methodology

Because the researchers' aim was to explore the ways that ESP instructors made sense of their roles within their unique contexts, the investigation was carried out through a qualitative approach (Yin 2014), in which the participants were asked to respond to a series of in-depth, open-ended questions concerning their teaching background and experiences, their level of training and preparation, perceptions of their ability to deliver ESP instruction, their institutional environments and any challenges they faced.

4.1 Setting

The study was carried out simultaneously in two different institutions, major research universities located in Turkey and Latvia respectively.

The Turkish Context In Turkish universities, instruction in English as a foreign language may be delivered in various circumstances. First, all students who are enrolled in non-English-related degree programs (from engineering majors to art majors and so on) are required to take two basic English courses – English I and English II – usually in their first two semesters of study. These mandatory courses are organized by schools of foreign languages – found in all Turkish universities – that are responsible for organizing and delivering EFL instruction for all students (with the exception of students in English related fields such as English Philology, English Language and Literature, and English Language Education, who receive English instruction throughout their study in their own departments). Second, many degree programs offer English-related courses (e.g., Business English, English Reading and Writing, and so on) that are administered by the related departments, either as core subjects or as electives. These courses may be taught either by lecturers from the schools of foreign languages or by faculty members of the related departments.

As noted previously, English lecturers in Turkish universities are not required to have a background in English language teaching (or even in English). Because of this, teachers of English for Specific Purposes *may* have training in language instruction; but they may also be assigned without a language teaching background, either because they are involved in an English-related field or because they simply have a working knowledge of English. For example, an individual with an advanced degree

in engineering who has spent time abroad in an English-speaking country may be considered as qualified to teach English to engineering students.

At the Turkish university targeted in this study, ESP courses are mainly delivered by lecturers from the Department of Modern Languages within the School of Foreign Languages; these may be individuals with degrees or pedagogical certificates in English language teaching, or they may be degree holders in other English-related fields. On the other hand, some courses may be taught by subject-area instructors who are simply proficient users of English. It is common practice at this institution for the instructors who will be teaching English to meet at the beginning of the academic year to decide on a strategy for teaching. In this process, they may select a textbook that they will all use in their courses, regardless of their academic subject area. The end result of this is that courses intended to provide subject-related English skills typically involve little more than grammar instruction.

The Latvian Context The Latvian university that was involved in this study encompasses academic education programs that last three or 4 years for bachelor's degrees, 1 or 2 years for master's degrees; and 3 or 4 years for doctoral degrees. Furthermore, professional higher education degrees are available; these are divided into first level and second level professional higher education. These programs last at least 4 years. Programs at all of these levels were targeted for this study; within them, English for specific purposes is taught in departments such as education, psychology, information technology, sports sciences, and so on. Courses are typically taught by English language teaching professionals with either ELT degrees or pedagogical certificates; however, as is the case in Turkey, some courses may be taught by individuals from other academic disciplines.

4.2 Participants

As the discussion of the study setting makes clear, instruction in ESP at each of these universities is applied in multiple departments, and the organization is not always clear. Due to this circumstance, an efficient means for contacting the full population of English instructors was not available. Therefore, the participants in the study were selected via a purposive sampling process (Creswell 2007), wherein the researchers reached out to colleagues who were able to identify ESP lecturers who might be willing to participate.

A total of twelve instructors were contacted and asked to volunteer; six from each university. All twelve of these agreed to participate. Six of the instructors were Turkish males; four were Latvian females, and two were Latvians who did not identify their gender in their demographic information. The respondents had anywhere from 2 to 35 years of teaching experience. All but one had an educational background in an English-related field such as English language teaching or English philology. This individual had a PhD in philosophy, but had spent a number of years studying in the United States and had a high level of English proficiency. At the time

of the study, the participants were teaching ESP in subject areas including medicine, international relations, educational philosophy, education, research methodology, sports sciences, information technology, household and economics, social pedagogy, psychology, design and law. None of the Turkish participants had received any type of training in teaching English for specific purposes. Two of the Latvian instructors had taken courses in ESP methodology. While three of the other Latvians did not indicate that they had taken courses in ESP teaching during their teacher preparation, they reported that they had encountered the topic through professional development activities. One of the Latvian instructors had no background in ESP. A summary of the participants' characteristics is provided in Table 1.

4.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The data for the study were collected via self-administered interviews consisting of twelve open-ended questions that asked the respondents to elaborate on their training and skills as ESP instructors, the teaching environment in which they worked, the challenges they faced, and any steps they might have taken to overcome them. The self-interview process was preferred by the researchers, as this allowed the respondents time to gather their thoughts and provide reflective responses to the questions (Allett et al. 2011). The questions were initially prepared by the first researcher and then reviewed by the second and third researchers to determine whether they addressed the research questions sufficiently. After verifying the content of the questions, the researchers distributed them to the participants, who completed them and returned them via email. The participants were assured that taking part in the study was voluntary and that their identities would not be revealed.

In analyzing the data, the responses to the self-interviews were read several times by the researchers in order to develop familiarity with the content (Kvale 2007). Recurring ideas were identified and then used to categorize the types of responses. The content was analyzed according to these themes, and similarities and differences between the two sets of respondents (Turkish and Latvian) were noted. The researchers discussed the analyses to ensure agreement concerning the interpretations (Creswell 2007). The results of the investigation are presented in the following section.

5 Results and Discussion

The results obtained from the self-interviews are described in the following sections. Because the response types aligned closely with the research questions, they are discussed accordingly, using examples from the participants' responses to support the researchers' interpretations. Throughout the reporting, the participants are designated as 'T' for Turkish or 'L' for Latvian, with a number assigned to each; for

Table 1 Participant information

Participant	Age	Gender	Years of teaching experience	Educational background	ESP training?	Current ESP subject area
T1	53	Male	25	ELT	No	Medical
T2	57	Male	26	ELT	No	Medical
T3	35	Male	13	ELT	No	Medical
T4	39	Male	12	ELT	No	Medical
T5	41	Male	17	ELT	No	International relations
T6	35	Male	2	Philosophy	No	Educational philosophy
L1	47	Female	26	ELT	Professional development	Education, research methodology
L2	59	Female	35	ELT	Professional development	Education
L3	N/A	N/A	14	ELT	ESP methodology course during teacher training	Sports, IT, household and economics, social pedagogy, psychology
L4	67	Female	34	English philology	ESP methodology course during teacher training	Design, "all kinds of courses"
L5	40	N/A	19	English philology	Professional development	Law
L6	44	Female	18	English philology and teacher qualification	No	Medical

instance, T1, T2, L1, L2, etc. The aim in doing so was to differentiate the Turkish and Latvian instructors while maintaining their anonymity.

5.1 The Institutional Environment and Its Impact on the Teaching of English

Throughout their responses, the Turkish participants, in particular, noted several aspects of their institutional environment that made teaching English difficult. For instance, participant T2, who was teaching ESP for medical students, indicated that crowded classrooms were "the worst obstacles in teaching English." This problem was compounded because his students had varying levels of proficiency, so it was

not possible to group them effectively. His view echoes the beliefs of Suzani et al. (2011), who argue that crowded classrooms are significant institutional obstacles to effective instruction in English; as well as Ünal (2014) and Hoa and Mai (2016), who found that differences in learner proficiency in a single course prevents ESP teachers from tailoring their instruction to students' ability levels. A further problem, pointed out by T1, was a general lack of organization and poor management on the part of the administration of the school of foreign languages. Participant T4 expanded on this issue with his view that administrators should appoint English language teachers who had experience in the relevant subjects to teach ESP courses, rather than assigning them at random. As he explained, "It is not efficient or reasonable to ask a teacher to teach to students of civil engineering one year and students of medicine the other."

To one degree or another, all of the Turkish respondents seemed to believe that *someone else* should be responsible for teaching ESP courses. Those who had backgrounds in English-related fields generally expressed that the departments in which they were teaching should administer their ESP courses with their own faculty members, rather than "passing the buck" [participant T2] to the English professionals. On the other hand, the one subject area teacher in the sample reported the opposite:

> Professionals educated specific[ally] for teaching English should teach any English courses at any university. Having a lack of … instructors in this field is not an excuse for placing a burden on other academics who are educated in other fields.

While most of the Turkish instructors expressed negative views of the teaching environment, the Latvian participants had little to say on this issue. However, one instructor, L2, did comment on the inconsistency in how ESP was administered from one department to another. Furthermore, she felt that the timing of ESP courses in terms of learners' progression of study was inappropriate. As she put it, students were unlikely to benefit from English courses related to their subject area while they "almost completely lack subject knowledge in their mother tongue" – a concern that has also been indicated by the British Council (2015) as highly problematic. Furthermore, participant L4 found that access to appropriate materials was problematic, as with Hoa and Mai (2016).

Taking the views of both the Turkish and the Latvian participants into account, it may be argued that neither of these universities provides an ideal environment for the teaching of English for Specific Purposes. Problems such as lack of organization and planning (which were more strongly indicated by the Turkish participants, but also mentioned by the Latvians) may lead to confusion as to how and why English is being taught, as well as inconsistencies in its implementation. Furthermore, overcrowded classrooms, as well as the enforcement of instruction in ESP with students who do not yet have the prerequisite basic English skills, results in a situation where students are largely unable to benefit from ESP learning. Similar issues have been frequently cited in contexts as diverse as Albania, China, Vietnam, and Iran (Bracaj, 2014; Chen 2011; Hoa and Mai 2016; Suzani et al. 2011), as well as by other studies carried out in Turkey (e.g., Ünal 2014).

5.2   Skills Required for Teaching English for Specific Purposes

Because the instructors targeted in the study all had a significant level of experience in teaching English for specific purposes, it was expected that they would have a good level of understanding of the skills that are needed for teaching English skills in relation to a given discipline. In this respect, both the Turkish and the Latvian participants expressed similar views. For the majority of the participants, a combination of English language skills, pedagogical knowledge, and subject area knowledge was considered to be a satisfactory balance. As participant T6 explained, a mix of "subject area knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, intercultural experience and language skills are required to meet the needs of any ESP learners." Participant L3 expanded on this with her concise assessment of the requirements for ESP teachers, which involved:

> (1) an introduction to the subject area, (2) consultations provided by subject area teachers on the topics to be covered, (3) guidelines provided by the institution and specific program directors on what competences should be developed in a foreign language course, (4) additional training courses abroad (in Latvia you cannot get these) on how to work with subject-related texts and methodology, [as well as] where and how to select teaching materials financially supported by the institution.

This last statement, in particular, reflects the need for a comprehensive approach to English language teacher preparation, an area that has often been found to be lacking by researchers such as Büyükkantarcıoğlu (2004), DeVillar and Jiang (2006) and Kızıldağ (2009).

5.3   Teachers' Views of Their Pedagogical Skills and How They Developed Them

Overall, the participants expressed a consensus regarding the skills required to teach ESP effectively within their individual contexts. However, their views on their own level of ability were somewhat varied. The Turkish instructors often expressed that they had the necessary English-related knowledge and skills; yet they believed that subject area knowledge was more important for teaching effectively and felt that they were deficient in this regard. According to participant T3:

> I believe that if I am to teach medical English, it is not enough to have a good command of the language. I feel that I need to know more about the particular field that I was teaching … I feel confident in terms of all the [language] skills involved, but jargon is where I feel insufficient. My pedagogical knowledge of teaching English does not actually seem to matter, either; it is hard teaching in a medical faculty.

Their difficulties in this regard are reflected by Hoa and Mai's (2016) contention that ESP teachers often lack sufficient knowledge in the subject area in which they are teaching, and that their ability to deliver effective instruction suffers from this shortcoming. On the other hand, the Turkish instructors expressed, on the whole,

that they were able to compensate for their lack of subject area knowledge through experience in the ESP classroom; according to T2, after 4 years of teaching the same course in medical-related English, "I have enough skills."

In the case of Latvia, the lack of training in subject area skills appeared to be less of a problem, as several of the participants had received training in ESP – either through their initial teacher preparation or through various professional development efforts. Participant L1, for example, explained that, although she had not received direct training in ESP through initial teacher preparation, "Learning from colleagues, British Council Courses, self-studies, [and] professional development courses" had contributed to her ability to deliver effective ESP instruction. Furthermore, as with the Turkish instructors, their own classroom experiences had been beneficial in developing their skills. For instance, as L3 reported, "University education gave me the direction and a broad understanding, but everything else I have learned from my own experience and practice."

The responses of both the Turkish and the Latvian participants revealed that, on the whole, they believed that professional experience, rather than their teacher training, had provided them with the necessary skills to teach English for specific purposes. While experience may have considerable merit, inadequacies in teacher quality have often been blamed on sub-standard teacher training (Çelik Submitted; Özer 2005; Özmusul 2011). With this view in mind, it may be argued that it is not enough to leave teachers to develop their own skills through practical experience or individual efforts at professional development; instead, institutional measures are needed to provide both the subject-matter knowledge and the pedagogical skills in relation to English for specific purposes prior to assigning teachers to ESP classrooms.

5.4   Challenges Faced in Teaching ESP and Steps Taken to Overcome Them

By far the most often reported difficulty in teaching English for specific purposes in either the Turkish or the Latvian context involved subject-related terminology. This problem was especially prominent in the Turkish context, where most of the participants were teaching medical-related ESP courses. As an example, T3 explained that while the grammar related to his subject area was not an issue, the field-related terminology posed a major challenge. He reported having to spend a great deal of time looking up medical "jargon" on the Internet, a necessity which he found to be "very difficult and … time-consuming." Participant T4 mentioned a similar experience, noting that:

> I have to study/prepare for a longer period of time than usual to research about the topic. Sometimes, I research in my mother tongue to learn about the topic in detail, because knowing the vocabulary does not mean that you can understand the topic or a text.

While the Latvian instructors also faced difficulties in preparing and delivering ESP instruction, they were often able to find outside assistance, rather than dealing with them on their own. Participant L2, for instance, was able to find opportunities to learn more about teaching English for specific purposes through resources offered by "Oxford University Press, Pearsons, Longman, [and] participation in projects and conferences." However, L4 felt that opportunities for professional development were out of her reach. As she pointed out:

> There are opportunities to attend courses/trainings abroad, but [they are] self-financed, and I do not think that I should spend so much of my personal income in order to satisfy the institution that cannot not even provide a decent teaching program.

The notion that professional development may place an unreasonable financial burden on EFL teachers, or that the available opportunities are irrelevant to teachers' individual contexts, has been emphasized by researchers such as Çelik (2016); and these issues seem to be at play in the current case, as well. While some teachers may be self-motivated to seek out opportunities for improvement, others may need greater encouragement, whether through institutional support or other means.

6   Conclusions and Recommendations

Although this study involved only a small number of participants who were teaching English in just a handful of subject areas, the characteristics of the study participants and the contexts in which they work are fairly typical within the related educational systems. Thus, while larger-scale studies in a broad range of institutions may provide more generalizable data, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn. The overall sense that can be established from the results is that the conditions for teaching English for Specific Purposes are not ideal in either the Turkish or the Latvian context, and that systematic change is needed in a variety of areas to move beyond the teaching of basic English to providing actual ESP training, as discussed in the following sections.

6.1   The Institutional Environment

In terms of teaching environments, the Turkish and the Latvian cases exhibited similar limitations. While the Turkish education system has been long-established, and the Latvian system is still in a state of flux following a period of political upheaval, both of these contexts appear to be characterized by a lack of planning and organization of ESP programs. Under these circumstances, teachers are obligated to deal with:

- a lack of consistency in curricula, leading to confusion about what is to be taught;

- limited access to appropriate teaching materials, leaving teachers to either find or create their own, or to turn to general grammar texts, rather than focusing on subject-area language skills.
- learners who lack basic English skills and are therefore not well-prepared for specialized language training.

In addition, in Turkey's case, overcrowded classrooms, with students who are of varying proficiency levels, makes it difficult to tailor instruction to meet the needs of all learners; a circumstance that posed less of a concern in the Latvian context. However, in both cases, the general attitude was that both the teaching environment and the characteristics of the students limited the ability to address complex language skills, and that basic English was all that could be taught.

With these issues in mind, it can be suggested that higher education institutions should, through in-depth needs analysis, develop a standardized strategy for the provision of ESP, with a clear definition of the competencies to be achieved and the standards for instruction; and that this strategy should be implemented from a holistic perspective, rather than left to individual departments. By doing so, university and professional programs may deliver a more consistent approach that makes sense both to course instructors and to students. Moreover, resources should be allotted to provide for smaller class sizes, with adequately trained teachers and materials that are specifically designed for ESP training within the given subject areas.

6.2 Skills Required for the Teaching of ESP

With respect to English language teaching skills and training, it can be argued that the teachers – as the individuals most closely involved in the implementation of ESP – may have the best understanding of the skills that are needed, and that their views should be considered in determining the types of training that are necessary. In this study, both the Turkish and the Latvian teachers stressed that subject area knowledge should be considered with at least as much emphasis as pedagogical skills, and training should be offered in terms of the discipline-specific terminology, register and discourse.

Therefore, to address this need, instructors who are assigned to teach English for specific purposes may be provided with access to specialized training from ESP experts in the given subject area; either through workshops held within the particular institution or through financing to attend professional development programs. Furthermore, teachers should be supported in joining professional organizations and connecting with other ESP instructors in their fields as a means to collaborate on strategies for problem-solving, to share resources, and so on.

6.3 Approaches to Coping with Challenges

Finally, as relates to the challenges involved in ESP instruction and how instructors deal with them, a substantial contrast was seen between the Turkish and Latvian participants. On the one hand, the Latvian teachers reported a degree of resourcefulness in dealing with the obstacles they encountered, such as seeking out professional development opportunities on their own or reading professional literature. On the other hand, the Turkish instructors appeared to be frustrated with the situation and to fault the system for their difficulties. In particular, they expressed the general attitude that teaching English was a burden and that the responsibility should belong to someone else. While some of the instructors tried, at minimum, to increase their knowledge by reading about the subject in which they were teaching, they mainly demonstrated little initiative to improve their circumstances. This points to a lack of motivation, which could be alleviated to some degree by addressing the institutional factors mentioned previously, such as overcrowded classrooms and a lack of clear learning goals and standards. Furthermore, adequate compensation, as well as visible institutional support for ESP instructors, may contribute to ESP teachers feeling valued in their role, and thus more invested in doing the job well.

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