

## English for Specific Purposes in Kosovo's Private Language Centers: Availability, Market Demand, and Challenges

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### Abstract

*This study investigates the types of ESP availability, teachers' preparedness, institutional capacity and learners' perspectives in private language centers in Kosovo. A mixed-methods approach was employed, involving 25 administrators of private language centers, 50 English teachers and 75 learners. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and open-ended responses were examined through thematic analysis. Findings indicate that most private language centers in Kosovo offer at least one ESP course, while Business English and English for Information Technology emerging as the most widely available and most-in demand fields, both showing a noticeable increase over the past five years, reflecting current labor market priorities. Although 78% of teachers reported limited formal ESP training methodology, they demonstrated strong professional autonomy by adapting internet-based and authentic materials to meet learners' workplace needs. Institutional challenges were substantial: 84% of administrators reported outdated teaching materials, 75% identified insufficient funding for professional development, 60% noted learners' weak general English proficiency, and 52% reported limited cooperation with employers. Learners' responses confirmed that ESP is primarily pursued to improve workplace communication and career advancement, while many respondents reported initial difficulties in verbal communication in professional settings. The study highlights a widening gap between labor market expectations and instructional capacity in Kosovo's private language sector. It offers practical implications of curriculum development, teacher training, and industry collaboration in a transitional educational context.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English is the language of international communication in academic, professional and technological domains. The expansion of English as a language has happened as a result of different reasons, including here globalization, the evolving digital era and migratory movements. The expansion of globalization, digitalization and labor mobility has intensified the need for profession-specific language competencies. Within this context, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has gained increasing usage as an approach to language instruction that responds directly to learners' academic and occupational needs.

Unlike General English (GE), which focuses on four integrated skills as reading, writing, listening and speaking, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) represents a learner-centered approach with specialized linguistic skills relevant to specific professional or academic fields such as business, information technology (IT) engineering, healthcare, tourism

and law. As defined by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) ESP is an approach in which course content and methodology are determined by learners' specific purposes for learning. This needs-based orientation distinguishes ESP from general language instruction.

In Kosovo, English plays a central role in education, employment, and international integration. Private language centers represent an important sector of English language provision beyond the formal education system and are often expected to respond rapidly to market demands. However, despite the increasing importance of profession-oriented language skills there is limited empirical research examining the extent to which private language centers in Kosovo offer ESP courses, which ESP branches are most demanded, and how prepared English teachers are to teach such courses, as many English instructors are primarily trained in General English and may lack ESP-specific expertise (Basturkmen, H. 2010), and the learners' general English proficiency, which can affect the effectiveness of ESP instruction (Robinson, P. 1991).

This study addresses this research gap by examining ESP provision in Kosovo's private language centers. Specifically, it investigates (1) the types of ESP currently offered and most demanded fields, (2) teachers' preparedness to deliver ESP courses effectively, (3) the challenges faced by institutions implementing ESP programs, (4) learners' experience from ESP courses. By situating Kosovo within broader post-socialist and Balkan educational developments, this study contributes to a better understanding of how language education aligns with labor market demands in transitional settings by finding answers for these research questions:

RQ1: What ESP courses are most widely offered and demanded in Kosovo's private language centers?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive their professional preparedness for ESP instruction?

RQ3: What structural and instructional constraints affect the effective implementation of ESP programs?

RQ4: How do learners evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of ESP courses in relation to their professional communication needs?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 English for Specific Purposes**

ESP has gained significance due to the forces of globalization, international business, technological advancement, and labor mobility, creating a demand for English proficiency in sectors such as business, healthcare, information technology, engineering and tourism (Anthony, L. 2018). Employers increasingly expect graduates to communicate effectively in specialized professional contexts, making ESP a central component of higher education, vocational training and private language institutions.

### **2.2 English for Specific Purposes in Kosovo within Balkan and Post-Socialist Contexts**

In post-socialist countries of the Balkans, including Kosovo, ESP development has been closely related to broader factors and processes of educational reform, European integration, and transformation of labor market needs. This chapter examines foundational ESP theory alongside regional and post-socialist context in order to give perspective on Kosovo's ESP situation within Balkan trends.

### **2.3 ESP in Post-Socialist and European Higher Education**

Following the collapse of socialist systems in Central and Eastern Europe, English assumed a strategic role in educational reform and integration into European and global academic networks.

Studies examining ESP in post-socialist higher education highlight challenges such as limited resources, insufficient teacher training, lack of institutional support, and tensions between traditional language teaching and market-oriented curricula (Fortanet-Gomez, I & Raisanen, C. 2008; Chmelikova, J. & Hurajova, J. 2019).

#### **2.4 ESP in the Balkan Region and Kosovo**

ESP research in the Balkans reflects similar post-socialist dynamics while also revealing local specificities. Studies from North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Serbia document increasing institutional demand for ESP courses alongside persistent structural constraints (Petovska, V. 2015; Stefanova, A. 2019). Within this regional landscape, Kosovo represents a particularly compelling case due to its post-conflict reconstruction, young population, and strong orientation toward globalization. Husaj, S. (2021) identifies major obstacles in ESP instruction at the University of Prishtina, including large class sizes, lack of tailored syllabi, and limited collaboration between language teachers and subject specialists. Osmani, O and Sefiu, R. (2023) demonstrate that ESP significantly enhances students' professional communication skills in vocational education, while Vukićević-Nešić, T. and Lukić, S. (2023) report positive student attitudes toward ESP.

The literature indicates that ESP in Kosovo reflects broader post-socialist Balkan trends, characterized by growing demand, uneven implementation, and structural challenges. Situating Kosovo within this growing demand and theoretical framework enables a more nuanced understanding of its ESP development and future potential by mapping the availability of ESP courses in private language centers, identifying high-demand sectors, and evaluating teacher readiness to ensure that ESP programs effectively meet labor market needs.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to examine availability, demand, teachers' preparedness, and challenges related to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in private language centers in Kosovo. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data allowed for a comprehensive understanding of ESP provision and its alignment with labor market needs.

#### **3.2 Participants**

The research sample consisted of three stakeholder groups: 25 private language centers operating in different regions of Kosovo, 50 English teachers currently teaching EGP or ESP courses, and 75 learners who had attended private EGP or ESP courses. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure representation from various professional sectors, institutional contexts and learner background relevant to ESP provision.

#### **3.3 Instruments and Data Collection**

Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to all three participant groups. The questionnaires included close-ended items designed to measure:

- ESP course availability
- ESP fields demand
- Institutional and instructional challenges
- Learners' workplace language needs

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured teacher interviews and open-ended responses from learners. These instruments explored teachers' perceptions of preparedness and learners' experiences in ESP courses. The integration of qualitative data provided deeper insight into stakeholders' perceptions and helped explain patterns identified in the quantitative results.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to identify patterns in ESP availability, demand, and reported challenges. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, with responses coded and grouped into recurring categories related to teacher preparedness, institutional constraints and learners' needs.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participant anonymity and confidentiality were rigorously safeguarded throughout the research process. All data were securely stored, and participants were formally assured that their responses would be solely for the purposes of this study.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents and interprets findings in relation to the four research questions concerning ESP availability, demand, and challenges identified by teachers, course participants and private language centers' administrators.

### **4.1 ESP Availability and Demand**

This subsection addresses RQ1, which examined the types of ESP courses offered by language centers and the fields demonstrating the highest levels of demand.

Data collected from the 25 private language centers indicate that most institutions offer at least one ESP course. Business English and English for Information Technology emerged as the most commonly offered and most requested ESP fields, both showing a noticeable increase in demand in the past five years. Moderate, but increasing demand was reported for English for Engineering, English for Academic Purposes, Healthcare and Hospitality. English for Law and English for Aviation were offered less frequently and showed relatively lower demand (Table 1).

<b>ESP Field</b>	<b>ESP Availability in Language Centers</b>	<b>Level of Demand</b>	<b>Demand Trend (Past 5 Years)</b>
Business English	Very high (offered by most centers)	Very high	Noticeable increase
English for Information Technology (IT)	Very high (widely available)	Very high	Noticeable increase
English for Engineering	Moderate	High	Increasing
English for Healthcare	Moderate	Moderate	Gradual increase
English for Tourism and Hospitality	Moderate	Moderate	Stable to increasing
English for Academic Purposes (EAP)	High	High	Increasing

English for Law	Low	Moderate	Slight increase
English for Aviation	Low	Low to moderate	Relatively stable

**Table 1. Availability and demand of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) fields in private language centers based on data collected from 25 institutions.**

Overall, the findings indicate that private language centers in Kosovo offer their ESP courses according to learners' needs and requests. This alignment suggests that the centers are supporting learners' employability and industry requirements. It also highlights the role of private language education in equipping learners with practical workplace communication needs.

#### **4.2 Teachers' Preparedness for ESP Instruction**

This subsection addresses RQ2, which explored the extent to which teachers are prepared to design and deliver ESP courses effectively. Analysis of responses from the 50 English teachers revealed that most of them demonstrated willingness to deliver ESP instruction, but the majority of the teachers 78% reported limited formal training in ESP methodology or discipline-specific content. Teachers emphasized the need for modular and short-term ESP courses aligned with specific job tasks, such as professional correspondence, report writing, and IT project communication. This finding supports Basturkmen's (2010) observation that teacher preparation often lags behind market expansion.

Despite these limitations, qualitative data revealed an important and encouraging finding: teachers demonstrate a high degree of professional autonomy and adaptive practice in ESP instruction. Teachers emphasized that material selection is frequently guided by learners' professional and workplace communication needs and internet-based materials.

From a theoretical perspective, this practice aligns closely with the foundational principles of ESP, which emphasize needs-based instruction, flexibility, and the integration of authentic materials (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

However, reliance on self-designed and internet-based materials increases teacher workload and may result in variability in course quality, depending on individual experience. These findings suggest that while teachers show strong motivation and adaptive capacity, systematic professional development and institutional support are necessary to ensure sustainable ESP provision.

#### **4.3 Institutional Challenges in ESP Implementation**

This subsection addresses RQ3, which examined the institutional challenges affecting ESP implementation in private language centers according to their administrators. The results indicate that ESP provision is constrained by several key challenges originating at the institutional level (see Table 2). The most frequently reported challenge was outdated teaching materials identified by 21 administrators (84%). This finding suggests that many language centers lack materials in line with professional practices, terminology, and difficulties in tailoring courses to specific professional fields. Additionally, approximately 60% of respondents reported that learners often begin ESP courses with weak general English proficiency, which limits their ability to engage effectively with specialized content. Although this issue relates to learner characteristics, administrators identified it as an organizational challenge because it affects course design, and are often required to adjust course objectives toward general language development.

In addition, about 52% of administrators identified insufficient cooperation with employers as a major barrier to design authentic and relevant ESP courses. The lack of

systematic collaboration with industry stakeholders restricts information about professional language use.

Finally, a closely related challenge concerns insufficient funding for teacher trainings responded by 19 administrators (76%). Administrators indicated that limited budgets restrict their ability to provide specialized ESP trainings and workshops for teachers. This financial limitation directly affects institutional capacity to strengthen professional development of the teachers.

Challenge	Number of Administrators	Percentage (%)
Outdated teaching materials	21	84%
Learners' weak general English proficiency	15	60%
Insufficient cooperation with employers	13	52%
Insufficient funding for teachers' trainings	19	76%

**Table 2. Challenges in ESP Instruction Reported by Administrators (n = 25).**

From a theoretical perspective, these findings reveal a gap between increasing market demand for ESP and the institutional capacity required to sustain high quality provision. ESP theory emphasizes the importance of updated specialized materials, systematic needs analysis, and teachers' expertise grounded in domain-specific knowledge (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

The high proportion of administrators reporting material limitations and insufficient funding for professional development indicates that these core components remain under-supported at the institutional level. Overall, the findings suggest that ESP expansion within language centers is driven by market demand but constrained by limited institutional investment, restricted industry collaboration, and learner preparedness issues. Strengthening financial support for teacher training and fostering employer partnerships would enhance alignment between professional language needs and educational provision.

#### **4.4 Learners' Perspectives**

Responses from the 75 learners showed that participants undertook ESP courses to improve workplace communication and career advancement. Participants generally reported positive learning experiences, but expressed a need for more customized content closely aligned with their professional responsibilities.

Participants stated that General English was essential for employment, while stating strong English for Specific Purposes proficiency as a factor for career promotion. Participants reported that their English skills were developed through different learning sources such as formal education, private courses and self-directed learning using technology.

A large majority of respondents 93.3% (70/75) supported the idea of incorporating ESP in Bachelor studies, according to the field of study, instead of EGP, because it would facilitate them in accessing academic materials, adopting the demands of local and global labour market, and studying abroad.

When asked about workplace difficulties, participants indicated that initial challenges were mainly related to verbal communication, particularly during international meetings and presentations.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

This study examined the availability, demand, and challenges of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses in private language centers in Kosovo, focusing on administrators, teachers and learners as key stakeholders. The findings of this study confirm that ESP demand is increasing in Kosovo's private language centers, and as an established component of language training, with most private centers offering at least one ESP course. Business English and IT English emerged as the most widely demanded fields, reflecting current labor market priorities. At the same time, emerging interest was observed in other fields such as Engineering, Healthcare, Tourism, and English for Academic Purposes, suggesting a gradual diversification of learner needs over the past five years. Private language centers show responsiveness to learner requests and industry trends, confirming the market-oriented nature of ESP expansion.

However, the results also revealed that, while English teachers display high motivation and professional autonomy in adapting materials to learners' needs, many lack formal ESP training. Institutional limitations including outdated teaching materials, insufficient funding for professional development, learners' insufficient general English proficiency, and weak collaboration between language centers and industry stakeholders affect the effectiveness and practical relevance of ESP courses.

Learners' perspectives reinforce the importance of ESP for employability and career advancement, while many participants reported initial difficulties with communication in professional settings, which lead us to conclude that limited ESP skills reduced opportunities for promotion in their jobs. The strong support for integrating ESP into university curricula according to learners' need highlights the need for earlier and more systematic preparation in discipline-specific language instruction.

Overall, the study highlights a clear and growing demand for ESP courses in Kosovo, accompanied by a gap between market needs and current instructional capacity. Sustainable ESP development requires coordinated efforts among private institutions, universities and industry stakeholders.

### 5.2 Limitations

This study provides valuable insights into the availability, demand, and delivery of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in private language centers in Kosovo; however, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study focuses on private language centers within a national context, which may limit the generalization of the findings. Second, the research relies partly on self-reported data from administrators, teachers and learners, which may reflect subjective perceptions. Third, the research did not include direct classroom observation or analysis of teaching materials, which could have provided a deeper understanding of instructional quality. Finally, the analysis is primarily descriptive; future research could apply inferential statistical methods to examine relationships among variables such as teacher training, institutional investment, and learner outcomes.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made for improving ESP provision in private language centers in Kosovo. Language centers should invest in continuous professional development to enhance teachers' expertise in ESP methodology and ESP training modules in collaboration with universities, conduct regular needs analyses for curriculum

development and strengthen cooperation between teachers, employers, and education policymakers.

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### **AUTHOR'S BIO**

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