



Investigation of Moroccan University Teachers' Knowledge and Practices of ESP at Moroccan Schools of Engineering

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Abstract

Investigating Moroccan teachers' knowledge and practices of ESP and its impact on classroom programs and plans is slightly a new attempt in the field of education in Morocco. Many previous studies have examined the links between what teachers think and how they teach English for general purposes (EGP). Yet, this kind of study is infrequent and scarce in teaching English for specific purposes (ESP). Investigating teachers' knowledge and practices of ESP and its impact on different activities taking place in the classroom is missing from the existing literature on ESP teaching and teachers' development. In an attempt to address this gap in the literature, this study investigates teachers' knowledge and practices of ESP at three practical schools in Moroccan higher education. It mainly aims at inspecting the links between teachers' knowledge and practices of ESP and the potential impacts of contextual factors on teachers' knowledge in action. In order to get a complete and holistic understanding of teachers' knowledge and practices of ESP, ten (10) teachers from three various Moroccan schools in higher education were interviewed. A qualitative interpretive methodology was employed in collecting data for this study, using semi-structured interviews. The study results suggest that context plays a significant role in shaping teachers' knowledge and practices of ESP in Moroccan higher education and had a profound influence on their pedagogical and practical choices. The study also designates that there is a gap between teachers' "knowledge-for-practice" (theoretical knowledge) and their "knowledge-in-practice" (applied knowledge) that has been attributed to the shattering contextual factors. Finally, this study can be used as a path for ESP teacher development programmes to get insights into teachers' 'needs' 'deficiencies and "requirements."

Key Terms: Moroccan teachers, English for specific purposes (ESP), ESP teaching, Moroccan Higher Education

Introduction

My experience as a teacher of English both for general purposes (EGP) and English for specific purposes (ESP) at the ENSAM School in Meknes (the National School of Arts and Crafts of Meknes) was a significant factor in selecting the focus of this study. Dealing with difficulties and challenges that I have confronted in my job and identifying some continuing problems that happened year after year motivated me to investigate what teachers think about their profession, how they deal with the challenges in teaching ESP, and how they affect teachers professional progress and achievement.

Statement of the problem

In general, teaching and learning are two complicated processes embedded in context. According to Borg (2006), teachers' knowledge and practical decisions are context-bound. Therefore, the importance of this study is on teachers' knowledge and practices of ESP, counting a set of features that may enable teachers to put their knowledge successfully into practice to certify students' learning process. Accordingly, since context

influences language teaching and learning, especially in the ESP settings (Kaewpet, 2009), a review of different language teaching approaches and methods adopted in the Moroccan educational system in higher education becomes essential to understand both students' and teachers' educational backgrounds. Therefore, this study investigates the main problem of understanding what forms and arranges ESP teachers' knowledge and practices and how that knowledge could be applied in practice in Moroccan engineering schools. Namely the ENSAM School in Meknes, the High School of Technology in Meknes and the ENSAM School in Casablanca.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigates ESP teachers' knowledge and practices in three Moroccan engineering schools. The attempt to explore teachers' knowledge and practices stem from our interest in understanding how and why teachers decide to do what they do. Thus, this study helps develop more knowledge about the teaching of ESP in the Moroccan engineering schools; it also helps to understand teachers' actions better and thinking of ESP. Therefore, this awareness can enhance teachers, program designers' views concerning ESP teachers' "lacks", "needs", and "wants", and help them make well-versed decisions regarding the content of ESP teachers. The aim of exploring teachers' knowledge and practices about ESP in three Moroccan engineering schools is to obtain deep insights into what English language teachers need to know to perform their duties effectively. It may also help find links between teachers' existing knowledge of teaching and learning and how this knowledge enlightens and instructs their actions in ESP lessons.

This study draws attention to ESP teachers' voices and needs. It is an attempt to understand how teachers in these three Moroccan engineering schools understand ESP to know the effects of their knowledge on their practical and pedagogical choices and how they respond to different challenges they encounter in the field of ESP. This study also explores teachers' experience with ESP and language learning and teaching and its effect on their understanding of ESP practices. It also examines how teachers implement their knowledge in practice and identify possible influences that impact their practical decisions about ESP in their schools.

Review of literature

Designing teaching materials is a complex activity that demands adequate knowledge and understanding of its objectives, aims, methods, and techniques to serve the target language needs. In ESP, it is essential to realise why the course is offered and what goals it is intended to pursue and achieve. This awareness comes from syllabus objectives, which the results should inform students' language and target needs assessments. In this context, Smoak (2003: 27) echoes the communicative approach by introducing the concept of real-life tasks. It also Asserts that "ESP is English instruction based on actual and immediate needs of learners who have to successfully perform real-life tasks unrelated to merely passing an English class or exam. ESP is needs-based and task-oriented".

Nevertheless, most of the time, the choice of textbooks and teaching material at different Moroccan engineering schools are based on teachers' ideas and perceptions. One of the deceptive and misleading confines of Smoak's definition is that it does not explain what kind of real-life tasks are expected, e.g. social or job-market related. In his definition of ESP, Orr (2001: 207) identifies these tasks as the following:

"ESP is English language teaching designed to meet the specific learning needs of a specific learner or a group of learners within a specific time frame for which instruction in general English will not

suffice. This instruction often includes orientation to detailed spoken and written English, usually unfamiliar to the average speaker, which is required to carry out precise academic or workplace tasks.”

As far as learning is concerned, and according to Orr’s definition, students are the end product of an instructive system that stresses improving learners’ skills and cognitive abilities that facilitate positive learning. In other words, Orr’s definition highlights another aspect of ESP: that there is usually a specified timeframe for ESP courses (Basturkmen, 2006). Still, as Master (2005: 99) argues, “ESP seeks to weigh the importance of various elements in the genuine language situations English language learners will encounter”. This means that ESP courses should be planned and specified based on students’ specific work-related or academic needs. Therefore, this type of education does not deprive learners of developing self-directed or autonomous characteristics. This also indicates that ESP should not essentially be a process of teaching subject content per se. However, it should focus on developing learners’ English knowledge, language skills, and study skills to help them learn the subject content they require.

Teachers at various Moroccan universities or schools are predominantly trained to hold either Masters or Doctoral degrees in one of the following fields: Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, TESOL, TESL, Education, Curriculum and Instruction. However, most of these teachers lack initial training or orientation towards ESP. For example, both pre-and in-service teachers should benefit from ESP training to prepare for their new environment and familiarise them with the ESP practices. This includes the ESP course objectives, specific methodologies and techniques that could best serve various courses’ purposes, the course’s knowledge and material designing and /or adapting, different assessment systems for evaluating students’ understanding and the efficiency of the needs of their programs and for professional development.

Accordingly, the quality of teacher training program improves the quality of teaching as it provides teachers with the necessary tools and knowledge to facilitate learning. In this regard, Wilkins (1974:53) states that “his skill and personality are instrumental in making the conditions for learning. His skill is dependent on two influences, his proficiency in the language and his knowledge and proficiency in methods and techniques of language teaching.” In ESP, content knowledge goes beyond understanding the subject- matter and how to teach it to contain the content understanding of various specialised subjects that ESP serves. This type of knowledge differentiates the ESP practitioner from a mere language teacher who does not have to deal with concepts outside the realm of their expertise.

It is true that teachers have accumulated a great deal of knowledge through training and experience and that this knowledge inspires teachers’ practices. Teachers’ knowledge proposed that teachers needed formal (theory-based) knowledge and practical knowledge (knowledge constructed through experience). In this context, Borg (2003: 88) argues that teachers’ prior knowledge influences teachers’ learning and teaching cognition. Therefore, ESP practitioners are faced with the challenge of bridging knowledge of the subject matter and pedagogy to enhance practice, as in teaching EGP, and ‘re-contextualisation of the above knowledge with the specific content and pedagogical knowledge of ESP (Bernstein, 2000). In this respect, Shulman (1987) distinguishes between two types of pedagogy: General pedagogy and Content pedagogy. The former includes

broad principles and strategies of teaching in general. The latter consists of how subject knowledge is formulated and represented to understand others –how to teach a subject. As mentioned above, this type of knowledge that Shulman named pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) became the subject of many studies due to its significance for effective instruction. As a result, it could be argued that ESP teachers' unfamiliarity with the above elements could affect practice and endanger the accomplishment of the ESP program and its objectives.

Methodology

I decided to opt for qualitative data collection and analysis methods based on the constructive/interpretive theoretical framework to examine ESP teachers' knowledge and practical choices in the three Moroccan engineering schools. The selection of methods applied in this study is based on the philosophical assumptions deemed to serve current research purposes best. I decided to conduct this study following the interpretive/constructivist approach to understand the complexity of different situations and take a more holistic stance towards what is being researched for richer insights on explored issues.

In order to understand, interpret, and reconstruct the meanings that teachers give to their realities, the interpretive theoretical perspective seems to be compatible with the relativist/constructivist philosophical viewpoints. Interpretive inquiry "is characterised by a concern for the individual." It aims at understanding the personal world of human experience by getting inside the person and understanding from within (Cohen et al., 2007:21). It focuses on human action or what Cohen et al. termed "behaviour-with-meaning". It also recognises that the social world of human interaction is fundamentally different from the natural world. "In the social world, people have their intentions, their feelings and emotions impacted by each other as well as the setting in which they live" (Randor, 2001:17).

Using the interpretive/constructivist theoretical framework fits very well with the aims of the current study, which attempts to understand the world of teachers' knowledge, practices and experiences that are socially constructed (Cohen et al., 2007) and tries to recognise teachers' views of the situation being studied (Creswell, 2003). In other words, the aim is to understand teachers' practical experiences through the meanings they share and the reasoning that they bestow upon their intentional actions in the educational context of their work. Cohen et al. (ibid) argued that: "actions are meaningful to us in so far as we can ascertain the intentions of actors to share their experiences."

Research Questions

The contextual factors and the challenges that might influence language teachers' knowledge, practices of ESP are tackled to get as close as possible to the realities of ESP teachers' educational world in Morocco and how the mutual relationship between teachers and context shapes and determines their practical lives. In order to achieve the purposes of this study, I designed research questions following a detailed investigation of literature concerning teachers' knowledge and practices of ESP in language education, in an attempt to answer two primary research enquiries: First, *what factors influenced and shaped teachers' knowledge and practices of ESP?* And second, *what challenges do teachers of ESP in Morocco encounter in implementing their knowledge into practice?*

Research instruments

Since this study is conducted from a qualitative methodological orientation because as an interpretive, I have to understand participants' reality from their point of view, which is made possible with a qualitative research approach. According to Dörnyei (2007:127), interviews might work well with an initial sample size of six to ten participants. In this respect, I aimed to collect data from ten (10) participants. Based on the aims and objectives of this study, I see that semi-structured interviews would best serve its purposes. Semi-structured interviews, thus, was contextually and culturally more acceptable, appropriate, and potentially conducive to collecting rich data in the context of this study.

Semi-structured interviews Questions

1. *How did you get familiar with ESP?*
2. *How long have you been teaching ESP?*
3. *How would you explain your experience as an ESP teacher?*
4. *Taking your experience into account, what type of knowledge a language teacher needs to teach ESP?*
5. *How different is teaching ESP from teaching EGP? And how necessary is this knowledge in your teaching?*
6. *What are the sources of your ESP content knowledge?*
7. *How does your knowledge of ESP affect your way of teaching?*
8. *How do you decide what content your students need? And how do you prepare for your ESP classes?*
9. *What approaches do you think are essential for teaching ESP?*
10. *How do you assess your students' performance in ESP?*

Populations and Sampling

Two types of sampling are used for research purposes: probability and non-probability. Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 78) argues that "in a non-probability sample, units are deliberately selected to reflect particular features of groups within the sampled population." Thus, samples are selected based on the characteristics of the population and the methods used (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). According to Ritchie and Lewis (ibid), this feature of qualitative sampling makes them well suited to small-scale, in-depth studies. Cohen et al. (2007:100) state that the quality of research is based on the methodology and methods' appropriateness and sampling strategy's suitability. They further argued that research style determines the sample size, which is usually tiny in ethnographic and qualitative studies.

As a result, the qualitative researcher needs to ensure that the sample is representative of the whole population. For example, the focus of this study was to explore teachers' knowledge and practices of ESP in three Moroccan engineering schools. Thus, EGP teachers who did not have experience teaching ESP would not represent the ESP population well. I interviewed ten (10) experienced ESP teachers with at least seven (7) years of experience for this study. Three teachers from ENSAM school of engineering in Meknes, four teachers from the school of technology in Meknes and three teachers from ENSAM school of engineering in Casablanca.

Table(1) Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participants	Qualifications	Gender	Age	Teaching Experience	
				TESP	TEGP
Participant 1	MA in Linguistics	Female	52	16	6
Participant 2	MA in ESL	Male	43	14	3
Participant 3	MA in Applied Linguistics	Male	40	9	8
Participant 4	MA in TESL	Male	43	7	12
Participant 5	PhD in TESOL	Female	45	11	10
Participant 6	PhD in Curriculum Policy	Male	43	13	6

Participant 7	MA in Science Education	Female	36	8	2
Participant 8	PhD in TESOL	Male	44	10	11
Participant 9	MA in TESL	Female	39	8	7
Participants 10	PhD in Linguistics	Male	41	10	5

The experience was one of the factors in selecting the sample of this study. Experience is the essential prerequisite for developing expertise (Gage and Berliner, 1991, cited in Abdelhafez, 2010). Experience also plays a vital role in shaping teachers' knowledge and practices of ESP. Additionally, in order to fulfil the purpose of this study, I found interviewing experienced teachers to be more adequate than novice teachers. Reynolds (1995: 214, cited in Abdelhafiz, 2010: 105) emphasised that "expert teachers have established procedural knowledge for solving discipline problems than do novices, experts can divert more of their attention to problem definition, representation and strategy evaluation."

Data Collection Procedure

I designed an interview list of questions during the first phase and examined them—five teachers were selected for the pilot study. During and after the interview administration, I asked the teachers if they found any questions to be ambiguous or leading. I also asked if they had any suggestions and recommendations for improving the questions' sequence, organisation, and wordings. Some of those teachers had administrative positions besides their teaching practices. This fact proved to help get informative and professional understandings about the questions and the time of the interview, which was more or less an hour since the participants were keen on sharing their stories. As a result, I decided to allocate an extra quarter an hour to the interviewees if they were willing to share more information.

Having approached the ESP teachers and selected the sample that willingly agreed to participate in this study, I focused on the interview timetable arrangements. I decided to allow one week between each interview to get a chance to listen to the first one, reflect on my techniques, and get a general insight into the data. This helped the researcher enhance his/her technique for the following interview and informed him/her to elicit more data regarding issues raised.

Data Analysis procedures

I analysed the verbatim transcripts of the interviews qualitatively. Due to the interpretive nature of this study, I decided to analyse the data manually. This decision corresponds to Richard's (2012) view to avoid automating data because reading and thinking about data while coding them was central to the interpretive analysis. Another reason to engage manually with data was that the participants' number was relatively small. Managing the data myself would allow me to see connections and relations between different elements in data related to specific topics. Furthermore, manual analysis increases the level of familiarity with data by repeatedly reading transcripts and reflecting on them, paying attention to what has been explicitly said and the implicit information hidden 'between the lines. This kind of engagement makes it easier to decide which themes and concepts could be used to label data (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

Richards (ibid) differentiates between three types of coding: 'descriptive', 'topic', and 'analytical'. I used the three to code data and organised them under different categories. First, descriptive coding was used to sort the data about the participants, such as gender, years of experience, and age. Then, I used topic analysis to

organise the themes that the interviewees talked about and discussed. Finally, I used analytical coding to get deeper insights into teachers' knowledge of ESP and its influence on their practices. At this stage, accurate interpretation started. Richards (ibid) named this stage "analytical coding" because it referred to coding from understanding and reflection on meaning. This stage was longer than the descriptive and topic coding.

At this stage, I reviewed the transcripts again and tried to conceptualise a framework from the identified themes and notions. Then I organised and grouped them thematically under three topics, representing the themes and sub-themes. As interviews, more transcripts became available, and more categories and themes appeared. Thus, I had to reduce data to manageable during codification and categorisation processes. As I proceeded to the conceptualising and explaining stage, I had to decline the data, especially the repetitive and irrelevant ones.

Data Analysis and Findings of the Study

In analysing the semi-structured interviews, I started with topics and themes that I formed using existing concepts from the research and interview questions. More topics and themes were constructed and added during the analysis. I organised the topics, themes and sub-themes, thematically, under categories, and coded them to keep them safe and access them easily. After that, I divided the category box into two parts: the similarities in teachers' knowledge and the differences. I tried to find what Seidman (1998: 110) referred to as "connective threads."

Analysing connections between data collected from different participants is significant in studies like the present one. One of the intentions of this study is to investigate teachers' knowledge and practices, mainly to understand why teachers take or do not take specific actions. I also tried to pay attention to hidden messages 'between the lines' of respondents' conversations and/or in their body language and emotional expressions. I also wrote analytical notes about them and stored them with their sections. This step, I think, was necessary because teachers' knowledge is not always directly accessible. Besides, teachers sometimes share some information indirectly or tend not to tell the whole story. However, the body language, idioms, and shared data could portray those hidden data. The last stage was synthesising the data to ensure that all the content had been considered.

I present a detailed examination of issues associated with teachers' knowledge and their practices of ESP at three Moroccan engineering schools, namely the ENSAM school in Meknes, High School of Technology in Meknes and ENSAM school in Casablanca. I explain the sources and potential factors contributing to constructing their knowledge and report on the possible influences of teachers' knowledge and contextual aspects on teachers' practical and pedagogical knowledge. In this context, it is worth citing that some themes, such as the ESP teacher and the learner, the pedagogy, and the teaching context, might appear under different topics but are tackled using other focal points informed by each case.

In this section, I try to answer the first research question: What factors influenced and shaped teachers' knowledge and practices of ESP? I explore various themes related to teachers' understanding of ESP and their prior knowledge as learners and teacher-learners and their possible impact on their classroom practices. In the second part of this section, I attempt to answer the second research question: What challenges do teachers of

ESP in Morocco encounter in implementing their knowledge into practice? By exploring teachers' knowledge in action and the challenges, they might have encountered in implementing their knowledge in practice.

Theme 1. Teacher's Knowledge and Practices of ESP

In order to realise teachers' knowledge and practices of ESP in the three Moroccan engineering schools, I asked the applicants to share their understanding of ESP. The following analysis is based on the data elicited from the participants' answers to the interview questions. The data in this study indicated that most of the participants (seven out of ten) recognised that ESP courses were focused on English language courses made to fit specific learners. For example, a participant (2) stated that:

“ESP is more focused. I remember when I was doing my Master degree, they taught us about needs analysis. You have to know why the students are learning English. Why do they need English?”
(Participant 2)

In the same tone, a participant (3) talked about how she was astonished by the idea that ESP courses were designed and planned to students' needs:

“I had heard about ESP in 2009 when I was doing my Master degree in Applied Linguistics. I thought it was amazing because it was... I mean, we talked about tailor-made courses and curriculum. This is giving you the language skills that you need for your studies as well as your job.” (Participant 3)

This was apparent in the majority's comments on the nature of ESP courses and practices at their schools. For example, a participant (5) maintained that: “ESP is teaching the students the suitable language they need in their jobs, not what we are teaching them.” Most participants also share that ESP teaches some technical words or practical aspects of ESP courses to train learners to exploit job-related language used in different professions to perform particular tasks.

The data analysis of this study revealed that some teachers at these three schools did not have formal training in ESP. The participants declared that their knowledge about ESP and its practices developed mainly through their teaching experience. This matches with the views of McMeniman et al. (2003 cited in Mann 2005), Turner-Bisset (2001), and Tsui (2003) about the development of teachers' knowledge over time. In the same respect, Mann (2005) reviewed and agreed with a couple of participants who stated that after being exposed to ESP teaching at their colleges, they tried to improve their knowledge by attending conferences and reading the ESP Journals. In this regard, a participant (9) stated that,

“I First heard about ESP when I was doing my master degree; then, I got interested. There are journals like English for Specific Purposes, now it became LSP, Language for Specific Purposes, and I got interested.” (Participant 9)

Some participants revealed that, at the beginning of their career, they experienced confusion about their role in the ESP classrooms and the handling of the specific content they were required to teach. Participants stories about whether they were supposed to teach language or content revealed that some ESP teachers in the context of this study experienced what could be named as 'identity encounter or in crisis'. Teaching ESP with no prior experience, training, or orientation confused their roles in the ESP classroom.

Teachers in this study were not sure whether they needed to act as language teachers. Thus, they teach the language or serve as subject teachers, who unexpectedly had to learn and teach concepts beyond their

knowledge and expertise. In other words, they were not sure what they needed to teach: language through content or content through language. Apparently, in the beginning, they focused on teaching content and examining learners' understanding of the content, not the language knowledge and the awareness of the specific genres and their use. However, they realised through their experience that it was a language they needed to teach, not content – that they needed to use the specific content to teach the language skills required in the target context. In this respect, the participant (5) explained how time and experience helped her realise that she was a language, not a specialised, teacher: 0679731040

“At the beginning, not only me but all my colleagues in this institution, we focused on the content, which we took from their specialised courses. Now we don't. We used to teach them the content of their specific field; we were more like their specialised teachers, not language teachers. I keep saying to my students that I'm a language teacher, not a content teacher. I wanted them to know from the beginning that I will focus on the language, not the content; that I will teach them the language in the context they need.” (Participant 5)

Some teachers at these three schools were against teaching the specific content of various disciplines because they were against carrying upon their shoulders the burden of studying subject matter beyond their capabilities or interests. For instance, a participant (7) stated that 'Teaching English for Computing' is a very demanding course due to the amount of the specific genres and vocabulary items that the textbook included. Similarly, the participants (10) and (2) found English for engineering, technology, and science challenges. Participant (10) stated:

“In the school of technology, we have different departments, like English for international communication, we have mechanical engineer, electronic engineering, and electrical engineering. This means that we have so many ESPs, which are so hard. I used a dictionary in my sessions and looked up many new words. So I ended up making more effort than my students because I had to learn. It was very frustrating for the students and me because I wasn't teaching them things they needed to know. Honestly speaking, for me, it is very, very frustrating.” (Participant 10)

In an attempt to define ESP, three participants linked it to needs analysis. They believed that ESP courses are designed based on needs study or analysis results. In this regard, I see that these participants' views are valid because they reveal some awareness about ESP courses being needs-driven and focused. In this respect, the distinguishing nature of ESP means that every course is unique, which entails a different syllabus and certain teaching materials to provide for specific learners' needs. Although some participants believed that teachers' consciousness about learners' needs is essential for making better pedagogical choices, they did not seem to make any effort to understand and state these needs through any kind of needs assessment activity. Analysing learners' needs seemed missing in all three Moroccan engineering schools under the study. In answering a prompt on whether ESP teachers in Moroccan higher education are involved in conducting language needs analysis, a participant (4) replied that:

“I don't know, but through my experience, I really didn't see anyone doing any needs analysis or visit any workplace. And I don't know why? I don't know the reasons behind not doing it.” (Participant 4)

This reality was shared and agreed upon by most of the participants. Questions about teachers' pedagogical choices and methods about ESP courses suggested a gap in their knowledge because of their lack

of needs analysis and assessing their students. Yet, none of the respondents interrogated the absence of this core activity in the ESP practice at their schools.

Other respondents, mainly (6),(8) and (10), believed that teachers certainly needed to be aware of their students' needs for the language upon graduation, progression and to realise whether learners needed the language for work-related or academic drives. Participant (8) argued that teachers needed to distinguish "between ESP and EGP." He maintained:

"Teachers need to go to the employers and companies that are hiring graduates and ask them what kind of language tasks these graduates need to do on the job that requires English and take it from there." (Participant 8)

However, most participants (seven out of ten) agreed that this action was beyond their capacity and concern as teachers; they also stated that it is the institutions' responsibility to conduct such a "huge project." They suggested that a research committee should take up this responsibility as an alternative.

Theme 2. Perceptions of the ESP learner

In sharing their knowledge about ESP, all the participants also referred to the ESP learners. They all believed that ESP learners needed to have some basic understanding of the language to start with the ESP programs to get engaged and involved in its interactive courses. Conversely, they seemed to be disappointed to find out that some of their students' knowledge of English is very poor. For example, a participant (9) who taught at the school of technology in Meknes said that,

"Some students are impoverished in English, namely students coming from African countries[international students] to carry on their studies here in Morocco. Their level is even worse. Teaching ESP courses to these [linguistically] weak students is difficult. We have to improve their English first then think of teaching them ESP"(Participant 9)

Participants also believed that ESP learners should be motivated to learn the language because it is essential to their target needs and requirements, corresponding with researchers' views about ESP being motivating for learners (Brown, 2007). However, this truth seemed to be at odds with students who lacked and needed enthusiasm and motivation. Some participants believed that ESP learners must take their courses seriously, take the initiative, and be responsible for their learning. In other words, ESP learners need to be self-directed and enthusiastic to learn. However, most of the participants (eight out of ten) asserted that not all their students fit in the above image. In this regard, a participant (2) said that,

"I do inspire and motivate my students to participate in the class, yet they don't want to. They are not interested, except for some, but others are not interested at all." (Participant 2)

Other participants believed that ESP learners should be ambitious to pursue a professional goal. However, many students are "lazy", "uninterested", "unmotivated", "irresponsible", "careless", and lack academic skills and abilities. Participant (6) believed that for students to learn, they must have the desire for learning and, thus, this would be reflected and revealed in their attitudes and purposes. He explained that for learning to become successful, learners.

"have to be motivated, I think they have to know what they want to learn for their future and for the job-market to go after it. Not just to be interested in having certificates to get a job you know?" (Participant 6)

This view corresponds with Fenstermacher's (1986) view that "it seems unlikely that students will acquire the characteristics of learners unless they want to (p. 40)." All participants agreed with the above view and assumed that the educational system in Morocco encouraged dependent students that needed interest in learning. Therefore, as the participants shared their opinions of what ESP is and should be, they all referred to some ESP undertakings such as the choice of the syllabus, teaching material, the assessment system, courses, materials, and program evaluation. All these ESP undertakings were discussed in their responses.

Many participants (seven out of ten) believed that providing teachers with a chance to get involved in ESP activities such as course and material design is essential for the ESP program. However, they complained about having been deprived of such rights at schools where they used to work. For example, participants (7) and (3) protested about not having the privilege of choosing their syllabus and teaching materials. This, of course, resulted in teachers' disappointment and dissatisfaction and learners' indifference towards their education, stating that the contents of the program they use were usually irrelevant to learners' needs. Some textbooks in use were outdated and invalid. Participants (7) stressed that:

"We don't have the self-determination or the choice to decide on what to teach. They [the administration] force us to follow a strict syllabus and to use textbooks we don't like. I think as a teacher, I'm here to select the syllabus and the methods of teaching. Here they want to control everything, even your teaching. Again, teachers have to have their sayings in what to teach and how to teach that." (Participant 7)

Other participants agreed that their syllabi and materials were inadequate. However, they did not perceive designing courses and materials as their responsibility. In the absence of needs analysis, the choice of syllabuses and teaching materials was not based on factual information. However, teachers' perceptions and feelings about their learners' specific language needs assessment.

Understanding that the participants were not involved in any systematic course and material design of ESP, I tried to understand the standards that guided their personal choice of ESP syllabuses and materials. They were all unable to identify or provide any theoretical or practical measures for choosing their syllabuses and materials. The participants' responses revealed that students' specific needs upon which objectives are decided and courses are designed must inform the choice of material, not vice versa. Consequently, teachers seemed to rely on and accept what was imposed on them.

Evaluation is one of the pillars of ESP because it assists its dynamic nature. In this context, the success of ESP programmes is based on the ongoing assessments of its courses, materials and practical outcomes. The absence of such an essential component of ESP in the context of this study could suggest that ESP might not be taken seriously and might indicate that there is a gap in ESP teachers' knowledge regarding this activity. In this respect, participants talked about two types of evaluation: 1) teaching material, 2) learners' achievement tests. As with the former kind of assessment, the participants stated that their choice of adequate textbooks to fulfil the ESP course objectives was based on their subjective and personal beliefs and views on the textbook suitability. In addition to the above traits, the participant (10) believed that ESP teachers needed to be familiar with their students' fields. She thought that teachers needed to take their job seriously to set an example for their students. He assumed that many staff members did not fit in the above category and that teaching ESP was

not taken seriously in this study.

Theme3 Teaching Needs and Challenges in teaching ESP

All the participants shared their opinions about contextual requirements for successful ESP programs and practices. They also believe that teachers needed some kind of orientation towards ESP practices. They state that pre-service training is necessary to familiarise them with the ESP courses they were expected to teach; besides, the methods and techniques used in teaching ESP. They justified this need because teachers assigned to teach ESP at these three schools in Morocco generally lacked knowledge about ESP. They suggested that in-service training is required to update teachers with various pedagogical choices and provide solutions to some teaching problems that research in the field offers. The participants' view of the facilities necessary is legitimate. All the above elements that their teaching environment lacked are proven to facilitate teaching and enhance learning (Earthman, 2004; McGregor, 2004).

Understanding how instructors conceived their knowledge of ESP based on their experiences as teacher-learners were analysed. This attempt was deemed necessary to reveal any possible connections between teachers' previous experiences with English language learning and teaching and their understanding of the teaching and learning of ESP, and the impact of their prior knowledge on their practice, as the literature suggests. In this context, teachers' experiences as learners shared similarities and differences based on the master or PhD programs they opted for to carry on their studies. Accordingly, they could be divided into two groups: those who carried out their studies in Applied linguistics majors and those who joined the Faculty of Science and Education.

The participants of this study had experienced two distinctive approaches to language teaching. Some were taught language following structurally-based methods, while others experienced communicative or interactive teaching and learning. Data regarding teachers' practical knowledge revealed that ESP teachers' professional choices are influenced by two main factors: context and the personal practical knowledge that they have accumulated through their experience. However, contextual factors played a significant role in shaping their valuable knowledge. The data also indicate a gap between their understanding of teaching and learning (theory) and what they ended up doing in their classrooms (practice).

The data so far suggested that ESP teachers did not have any kind of training to acquaint them with the specific content of ESP courses. Moreover, in the absence of needs analysis, their choices of content and pedagogy seemed to be based on readily accessible school books. Some participants also suggested that their ESP courses were more general than specific. This reality is the outcome of some of their students' low competency in English, mainly international students coming from many African countries who opted for specific scientific majors to carry on their studies in Morocco. According to them, the students are weak in all four language skills and cannot produce accurate sentences. This reality turned interactive classroom activities into a problematic task and forced teachers to improve learners' language skills. Hence, teachers sought to simplify the content in response to the learners' low competencies. In this regard, a participant (2) maintained:

“One of the worries that I encountered in my classes is some students' low level of the language. How can I teach ESP when my students' level is below fundamental? they cannot give a well-structured sentence; their vocabulary and grammar are poor and weak, so I can't come in with

high expectations”(Participant 2)

In this context, teachers convey to learners that they are language teachers, not subject specialists and that they teach them the language in a familiar and meaningful context. This action prevents teachers from acting as experts in ESP fields and putting themselves in uncomfortable situations. As a result, teachers chose to apply the structural approaches focusing on teaching vocabulary and grammar to prepare their students for their structurally based exams. Teacher-centeredness with the slightest learner interaction became a norm in most ESP courses offered at the three Moroccan engineering schools under the study.

Another challenge that the participants faced in teaching ESP was inadequate teaching material and resources. They complained that they had to use preliminary books for years. Participants were unsure who ordered those books and on what basis; they were anxious because they had to use dated books they did not choose or order. Some participants decided to use supplementary materials to compensate for the lack of good books. As aforementioned, the data indicated that the choice of textbooks did not follow any systematic criteria serving learners' needs or considering their particular context. According to some participants, the effectiveness of the textbooks was based on the perceptions of the members of the curriculum committee, who were not necessarily experts in curriculum design and development.

To sum up, in this study, I introduced and analysed the data elicited from the interviews. The data was explored through different themes grouped under three main topics of teachers' knowledge of ESP, teachers' perceptions of the ESP learners and teaching needs and challenges in teaching ESP. Teachers' practical and pedagogical choices seemed to be influenced by their prior knowledge, perceptions of ESP practices, activities, and roles as ESP practitioners, most obviously by some contextual factors. The contextual factors are appeared to hinder the implementation of teachers' knowledge of ESP in practice. This could be summarised as: Students' low competency level in English; Students' lack of academic skills; Students' lack of motivation; Inadequate language assessment system; Lack of programs evaluation system, etc.

Conclusion, Recommendations and Suggestions

This study explored ESP teachers' knowledge and practices in three Moroccan schools of engineering, namely ENSAM school in Meknes, High School of Technology in Meknes and ENSAM school in Casablanca. This study found that the teaching context hindered the connection between what teachers did and what they knew. Therefore, in order to understand teachers' knowledge of ESP in practice, it is necessary to study it with the context in which it is performed. This study also revealed some gaps between theory and practice in teaching ESP. Therefore, due to the mutual relationship between knowledge and practice, understanding teachers' knowledge of ESP becomes inadequate if it is not approached with practice.

Since this study aimed at exploring teachers' knowledge and practices of ESP; besides, the rationale behind their pedagogical conclusions, the findings of this study provided future researchers with some insights into the nature of ESP teaching at different institutions in Morocco and the difficulties encountered in the implementation of knowledge of ESP into practice. This study explored teachers' knowledge and beliefs about ESP practices. It focused on how this knowledge was constructed and developed and shaped and influenced in practice by context. Therefore, the lack of adequate knowledge about the nature of ESP practices seemed to

play a significant role in managing some important ESP activities.

This study also showed that teachers revealed their frustrations with their situation on several occasions. This was apparent in using strong terms to talk about their teaching milieu. It also reflected their own emotions that varied from very frustrated to passive and submissive to the reality of their situation. The findings also suggested that some teachers were demotivated and lacked concentration and interest in their professional development.

Several implications are recognised from the current study that could inform ESP teachers and teacher training programmes to develop training courses that work better for ESP teachers' needs both in this study and the broader context of ESP. In this respect, the teacher could also focus on enlightening and improving ESP teachers' logical and critical thinking skills using reliable material, resulting from studies such as this one to illustrate when, how, and why experienced ESP teachers choose to do what they do in real schoolrooms.

Additionally, the ESP practitioner needs to be alert and mindful of the criteria used to choose different courses and teaching materials and understand their importance to ESP teaching. This helps practitioners make wiser and more effective choices that ensure the achievement of their ESP program objectives. Moreover, continuing ESP in-service training programmes, for example, play a substantial and essential role in developing teachers' pedagogical content knowledge. This role could be more powerful and the training courses more effective when they are informed by findings from research on teachers' knowledge and practices.

These kinds of arguments and thoughtful thinking could enrich teacher development programmes and offer teachers the chance to examine the potentials of applying theory in practice. It also helps in knowing the numerous influences that affect teachers' knowledge from multiple viewpoints. In this context, Abdelhafez (2010: 271) maintains that this would also "help trainee teachers realise that teaching is a knowledge-based activity." And that "teaching is a rational action when teacher educators highlight teachers' knowledge as well as their practice as an integral component of teacher education and professional development programmes."

Additionally, experienced teachers with professional development programmes could organise workshops to share their actual teaching experiences with the participants. They could also schedule classroom visits as part of a training course where trainee teachers could observe the authenticities of classroom lives and how teachers exploit knowledge in action. The observation could be followed by group discussion meetings to provide knowledgeable and experienced teachers with a chance to justify their pedagogical choices to allow trainee teachers to acquire and improve their analytical and thoughtful skills. This type of practical activity helps increase novice teachers' cognitive consciousness of the nature of teaching practices. Hence, teachers' responses and investigations could play an essential role in raising experienced teachers' awareness and realising their prominent theories that could have continued unexplored provided an external observer and vice versa have not appointed them.

This study suggested that teachers in some Moroccan schools for engineering are either unaware of the ESP curriculum or confused with the ESP syllabus. It also revealed that ESP teachers (the participants in the study) have complained about not being involved in curriculum or syllabus design. Decision-makers in the

Moroccan educational system continuously overlooks teachers of these institutions, and its executives need to be aware of the status of teachers by using their expertise when the curriculum is designed or amended. Additionally, decision-makers and officials need to understand that syllabus and course designing is a significant role of the ESP practitioner and one of the key characteristics of the ESP practice. Therefore, teachers' opinions were left out and excluded from the educational policies and were overlooked in recommending what language programs and syllabus needed to include. This view was supported by similar studies such as Al-Nwaiem's (2012). It was also revealed in Troudi's (2006) study, which indicated that: "teachers are often excluded from educational policy and play an insignificant role in decision making." As a result, teachers' voices and decisions must be considered. Besides, the importance of providing teachers with an accurate milieu would ease the implementation of knowledge in practice. They must also be mindful of the importance of ESP as a supporting subject and the decisive role it plays in the achievement and success of particular programmes.

Finally, the above suggestions can help improve teachers and specialists' awareness in Morocco about the crucial requirements for effective ESP programmes by addressing questions such as: what create ESP teachers' knowledge and what influences impact the implementation of teachers' understanding of ESP in practice? It can also inform ESP course developers to design ESP courses that consider all the factors that escalate and worsen the effectiveness and productivity of the ESP courses.

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