The Future of English for Specific Purposes Classes Beyond the Pandemic Context as Seen by the Students of Agricultural Sciences

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

While English for Specific Purposes has been dealt with by researchers all over the world, the insertion of educational technology and online environment is a relatively new concept. This article explores the main aspects of an effective online ESP learning process during the 2019-2020 academic year within the split frame generated by the pandemic context. It also aims at setting the educational frame for the future of ESP classes from the standpoint of the freshmen of Agricultural Sciences. An online questionnaire was answered, its structure being underlined by aspects such as content and skill-related tasks, accessibility, motivation, engagement, educational environment, media and assessment. The use of specialization-related materials is positively adjusted towards the online ESP classes, whereas frequency usage of skill-related tasks shows more balanced values between on-site and online ESP classes. In terms of schedule flexibility, the online medium is the more manageable of the two. If the combination of online exercises, specialized sites, online apps and platforms is clearly the norm for the online ESP classes, on-site assessment is evaluated as being more accurate. Although the students’ answers are relatively balanced, the majority agreed that the online environment is the most suitable frame for the future ESP classes.

Keywords: effectiveness; flexibility; on-site and online ESP.

INTRODUCTION

The present article explores the main aspects of an effective and flexible online ESP (English for Specific Purposes) learning process during the 2019-2020 academic year within the split frame generated by the pandemic context. It is an analytical study based on a questionnaire applied to the 2019-2020 freshmen of Agricultural Sciences, conducted on an on-site/online comparative basis, ranging according to different criteria related to balanced contents and tasks, specific usefulness, degree of accessibility, motivation and engagement, importance of physical and online educational environments, educational media, required teacher support and assessment. The primary objective of the current study is to determine the students’ informed selection of the on-site or online environment as a valid option for the future of ESP classes. The secondary objectives are closely connected to all the above-mentioned questionnaire criteria and aim at creating a comprehensive image on the on-site/online educational balance which, in the case of Agricultural Sciences, up to March 2020, tilted mostly towards the on-site, whereas online ESP teaching and learning revolved preponderantly around using educational platforms and sites during face to face classes. The topic of English for Specific Purposes has been dealt with for a long period of time by researchers all over the world, in various academic formats ranging from debates to articles, conferences, volumes, etc., generating a comprehensive specialized literature.
meant to help understand its contextualization, its purposes, the role of each actor involved in this field, the needs of the targeted learners, the applied course design in ESP as well as many other useful concepts. The insertion of educational technology and educational online environment in the case of ESP is a relatively new concept that has increasingly become part of academic life throughout the world. Veselá (2012) is one of the researchers who offer a comprehensive perspective on this subject. She synthesizes the stages of ESP and the researchers pioneering them: the beginning set in the early 1960s; the efforts directed towards a better identification and clarification of ESP (late 1980s); ESP as a means of communication in real-life situations (the end of the 20th century – the beginning of the 21st century) (Veselá, 2012). It is also presented a diachronically detailed view on the theoretical and practical concepts of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) and CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning – structural, communicative, integrative, ubiquitous and blended CALL), the researcher’s end purpose being of scientifically bringing forward what she terms CA-CLIL – Computer Assisted Content and Language Integrated Learning. Veselá (2012) thus exposes a double, technology updated perspective on the intertwining of specific methodology and educational means, materials and environment wherein several of the main elements are learner’s centeredness and autonomy, interactivity, task-basedness, cooperative and collaborative learning, agency and coactivity.

Another standpoint belongs to Anthony (2018) who thoroughly contextualizes ESP in relation to EAP (English for Academic Purposes), EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes), ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes), EOP (English for Occupational Purposes), EPP (English for Professional Purposes) and EVP (English for Vocational Purposes), while debating the four pillars of ESP (needs analysis, learning objectives, materials and methods and evaluation) and emphasizing the roles of ESP learners, instructors and administrators seen as decisive influencing factors in the general and particular layout of the ESP course. In addition, he shortly introduces the aspect of technology in an adapted creation process of specific materials (Anthony, 2018). Woodrow (2018) details all the aspects involved in ESP, but she also stresses out the significance of technology in ESP, listing elements such as blogging, microblogging, MOOC (Massive Open Online Course), CALL or LMS (Learning Management Systems), while Brown (2016) analyzes the specifics of needs analysis in ESP. Other articles cast light on different ESP aspects applied to different specialization domains. Thus, Frazer et al. (2017) define effective online teaching and indicators of quality in the medical field (nursing), Ghafooria and Sabet (2014) underline the roles of the ESP teacher as a skillful counselor and active practitioner, Prachanant (2012) discusses needs analysis of ESP in tourism (in the case of Thailand), Masters (1997) deals with the ESP teacher education in the USA, Rus (2020) presents several creative ESP methodologies for engineering students and the volume Vistas of English for Specific Purposes, edited by Nadežda Stojković (2015) comprises ESP articles related to the fields of art, business, customs, police and military force, law, mathematics, medicine, tourism, engineering and technology, political science and international relations and social sciences.

Although not strictly applied to ESP, Smith (2016) presents a significant and integrative review on what it means to train to teach and learn online, forwarding several relevant notions such as: the online environment as the main educational medium of the future and the corresponding educational paradigm shift; the history of online education going through the stages of distance education and learning, e-learning and, eventually online learning; student engagement, access to content and resources by applying the SAMR method (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition); accountability, adaptive assessment and teacher’s task-related and technology-related support.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The method used in gathering the relevant data for this study was that of the online survey. A questionnaire was answered by a total number of 23 students specializing in Landscaping, Horticulture, Engineering and Management of the Public Food System and Agro-tourism and Engineering and Management of Agricultural Business. The students were selected according to the convenience method as the main aim of this study is focused on their direct experience with on-site and online ESP classes. They answered anonymously and expressed their consent by filling in the questionnaire. Only the complete questionnaires were taken into account and their number represents one third of the students attending on-site and online ESP classes during 2019-2020.

In order to accurately analyze the consequences of the switch to the online educational environment at the level of the students of Agricultural Sciences, a comprehensive questionnaire has been designed and applied, its structure being underlined by theoretical aspects such as content and skill-related tasks, usefulness, accessibility, motivation, engagement, educational environment, media, teacher-support and assessment. Its purpose has been to properly store the students’ feedback and to obtain an informed opinion about a preferred further learning environment for the ESP classes. The students were provided with a description of the questionnaire and its purpose in English and Romanian. The questions and answering options were also given in English and Romanian (for a better and easier comprehension) and they were paired according to the two comparative indices: on-site and online. Only one option...
could be selected while answering each question. The questionnaire was created by using Google Forms and it was structured in more sections as follows:

- **section 1**: it has one question referring to the students' field of specialization;
- **section 2**: *Balancing ESP (English for Specific Purposes) Contents and Tasks During On-site and Online Classes* – this section comprises 12 questions referring to: a) usage degree of specialization-related materials – the 5 gradients vary from “very few” to “very many”; b) frequency percentage of reading and listening comprehension tasks, speaking and writing tasks as well as project-based tasks measured according to 5 categories of percentages (0-20%, 20-40%, 40-60%, 60-80% and 80-100%);
- **section 3**: *Usefulness, Accessibility, Motivation and Engagement During On-site and Online Classes* – this section has 22 questions: a) usefulness degree of reading and listening comprehension tasks, speaking, writing and project-based tasks with 5 gradients varying from “very little” to “very much”; b) individualized comparative usefulness selection for each of the five task types (reading and listening comprehension tasks, speaking, writing and project-based tasks) by applying the “on-site/online” criterion; c) accessibility and flexibility degree (with arguments) based on the “on-site/online” criterion; d) motivation and engagement degree in a crossed format with 5 gradients (from “very little” to “very much”) and the “on-site/online” comparative selection criterion (with arguments);
- **section 4**: *Educational Environment, Media and Teacher Support* – there are 11 questions related to: a) the influence degree of the learning environment on the efficiency of the learning process and on the students' learning comfortability level (“on-site/online” criterion), with 5 gradients (from “very little” to “very much”); b) class management strategies according to the “on-site/online” criterion (individually, in pairs, in groups); c) educational media and materials in different forms and formats (printed, online, specialized materials; app, platforms and sites); teacher support (necessity degree according to the “on-site/online” criterion; type of support – content-related, task-related, educational environment-related);
- **section 5**: *Assessment* – the students had to answer 4 questions regarding the fairness and accuracy degree of assessment during on-site and online ESP classes;
- **section 6**: *Conclusions* – there is one question requiring the students to take into consideration the aspects dealt with by all the previous questions of the questionnaire and to decide the best option for the following ESP classes – on-site, online or a combination of both.

**Term Clarification:**
- “on-site ESP classes” – used to describe the ESP classes between the beginning of the 2019-2020 academic year and the beginning of March 2020, although it was implemented after March 2020 and created in opposition to the contextually enforced “online classes” term; it is now used with this university to designate the classes that take place in a physical environment within an alternative hybrid system – on-site/online classes; it is employed throughout this entire article;
- “online classes” – used to describe the ESP classes that took place between the beginning of March 2020 and the end of the 2019-2020 academic year.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

There were 23 answers for this questionnaire, belonging to students from Landscaping (9), Horticulture (3), Engineering and Management of the Public Food System and Agro-tourism (3) and Engineering and Management of Agricultural Business (8). It should be mentioned that the ESP groups belonging to these specializations are not that numerous, with an average of 15 students per specialization.

**Balancing ESP (English for Specific Purposes) Contents and Tasks During On-site and Online Classes**

In the case of percentage usage of specialization-related materials, the gradients register the following values for on-site ESP classes: very few – 0%; a few – 8.7%; moderately – 26.1%; many - 34.8%; very many – 30.4% (as in Figure 1). The values of the same gradients for online ESP classes are as follows: very few – 0%; a few – 4.3%; moderately – 17.4%; many – 43.5%; very many – 34.8% (as in Figure 1). Thus, the value of the given gradients shows a definite positive tilt towards online ESP classes, this being marked by a noticeable increase of 8.7% for the “many” gradient complemented by an equally noticeable decrease of 8.7% for the “moderately” gradient, while the “a few” gradient downgraded by almost 50% of its value (from 8.7% to 4.3%). In a combined view of the “many” and “very many” gradients, the positive difference of 13.1% between specialization-related materials during on-site (65.2%) and online (78.3%) ESP classes is even more obvious.

The series of questions aimed at the usage frequency of various skill-related tasks during on-site and online ESP classes favor the online learning environment. Thus, 47.8% of the students considered that the frequency of reading comprehension tasks during on-site ESP classes was comprised in the 80-100% category, while only 26.1% expressed the same opinion for the online ESP classes. In the case of the frequency category of 60-80% usage for
the same type of tasks, the value for the on-site ESP classes is 21.7% and for the online ESP classes is double, namely 43.5%.

![Figure 1. On-site and online usage frequency of specialization-related materials](image)

For the listening comprehension task the most significant difference in frequency is for the 60-80% category where the on-site ESP classes score 30.4%, while its online correspondent, 47.8%, which means 17.4% more. The values for the 80-100% are close enough for both type of classes, namely 17.4% and, respectively 13%. There are also important differences for all the other frequency categories, a downward on-site/online trend being noticed for the 0-20% and 20-40% categories (the 0-20%, on-site category is allotted 13% of the answers, while the 0-20%, online category, 4.3%; the 20-40% on-site category gathers 26.1% of the answers, while the 20-40% online category, 13%).

The tasks related to improving speaking skills both during on-site and online ESP classes has the most balanced output, the values for each frequency category being quite close in range (20-40%, on-site = 13%; 20-40, online = 8.7%; 60-80%, on-site = 21.7%; 60-80, online = 26.1%) and, for two of them, identical (40-60%, on-site and online – 17.4%; 80-100%, on-site and online – 47.8%). It is worth mentioning the fact that the 0-20% category is not represented in the students’ answers, as it was also the case of the reading comprehension tasks. In addition, the value of the 80-100%/online category is the highest with this type of tasks, while the same value is registered for both speaking and reading comprehension tasks in the case of on-site ESP classes.

The frequency category of 80-100% usage of writing tasks was chosen as an answer by 26.1% for the on-site ESP classes and by only half of them for the online ESP classes. A reverse process takes place with the answers for the 60-80% category (17.4%, on-site; 26.1% online) and with the 40-60% category (21.7% on-site; 43.5% online) which has the highest percent for this type of task implementation during online ESP classes. The most spectacular difference, though comes with the 20-40% category which was selected by 30.4% of the students for the on-site ESP classes and by 13% of the students for the online classes.

For the project-based tasks, 43.5% of the students assessed that these tasks were applied with only a 0-20% frequency during on-site ESP classes and 34.8% did the same for the online ESP classes. These are the highest values registered by this category throughout all five types of tasks. In the case of the 20-40% category, there is a significant difference between task implementation during on-site ESP classes and online ESP classes: 8.7% and, respectively, 30.4% which shows a positive impact of the online educational environment in bringing forward PBL (project-based learning) activities, even if quantitatively not that noticeable. A difference can be also observed with the 40-60% category, although in opposition – 30.4% for the on-site and 13% for the online ESP classes, while the 80-100% category registers the same value of 8.7%.

**Cross comparison**

The chart below synthesized the percentage of students who have chosen different frequency categories for different skill-related tasks implemented during on-site and online ESP classes and is meant to offer a more easily comprehensible format. 47.8% of the students considered that the reading comprehension tasks were very frequently used during on-site ESP classes while 43.5% of the students answered that the same tasks were frequently used during online ESP classes; 47.8% of the students evaluated listening comprehension tasks as being frequently used during online ESP classes whereas 47.8% of the students decided that speaking tasks were very frequently used during both on-site and online ESP classes; 43.5% of the students appraised writing tasks as being moderately used during online ESP classes; 43.5% of them believed that project-based tasks had a very low frequency during on-site ESP classes, while 34.8% had the same opinion in the case of the online ESP classes; and 30.4% of the students agreed that project-based tasks had a low frequency during online ESP classes and a moderate frequency during on-site ESP classes. According to these data, there seems to be a fine task balance distribution,
whether positive or negative, during on-site and on-line ESP classes, with a very slight emphasis towards the online educational environment (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task/environment</th>
<th>Frequency category</th>
<th>0-20%</th>
<th>20-40%</th>
<th>40-60%</th>
<th>60-80%</th>
<th>80-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>on-site</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>online</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening comprehension</td>
<td>on-site</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>online</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>on-site</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>online</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>on-site</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>online</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Usefulness, Accessibility, Motivation and Engagement During On-site and Online Classes

The first concept to be dealt with was that of the usefulness of the five skill-related tasks (as in Figure 2). The students were asked to decide the degree of usefulness of each of them according to five gradients ranging from “very little” to “very much”. The results show the majority of students choosing degrees of task usefulness marked by the superior gradients (“much” and “very much”) as follows: reading comprehension tasks – 30.4%, respectively 47.8%; listening comprehension tasks – 43.5%, respectively 34.8%; speaking tasks – 26.1%, respectively 65.2%; writing tasks – 56.5%, respectively 39.1%; project-based tasks – 30.4%, respectively 17.4%. It must be mentioned that the “very little” gradient is missing from the students’ answers except for those in relation to project-based tasks and, for the same type of tasks, the majority of answers is held by the “moderately” and “much” gradients with 34.8% and respectively 30.4%.

Usefulness, Accessibility, Motivation and Engagement During On-site and Online Classes

The second concept comprised by this section of the questionnaire is that of accessibility to on-site and on-line classes according to the following criteria: presence/connectivity, access to and achievement of tasks and schedule-related flexibility. In the case of the first and the last criteria the students were also asked to present one or two reasons for their option.


Table 2. Comparative degrees of task usefulness according to the on-site/online criterion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>On-site</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening comprehension</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project-based</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

50% of the students considered that both on-site and online classes were accessible to them in terms of presence/connectivity and they did not encounter any difficulties from this point of view; the answers for the second criterion are more evenly distributed, 36.4% of the students assessing that their task access and achievement were not influenced by the learning environment, whereas 31.8% opted exclusively for the on-site environment and, equally, 31.8% for the online environment. However, the results for the third criterion show a definite preference for the online medium, 63.6%, followed by the on-site with 22.7% and a mixed choice with only 13.6%. The reasons given by the students are related to the fact that online classes could be accessed from anywhere simply by opening a link, thus saving time and ensuring an even better course attendance.

Motivation represents the third concept and the degree measuring gradients show that 30.4% of the students find on-site ESP classes very motivating, 30.4%, motivating and 30.4% moderately motivating, whereas 21.7% of the students consider online ESP classes very motivating, 39.1%, motivating and 34.8% moderately motivating, the overall balance tilting very slightly towards the online, despite the 8.7% difference favoring the on-site with the highest gradient. In a comparative context, 30.4% of the students decided that both on-site and online ESP classes are equally motivating, while 43.5% favored the on-site ESP classes, the reasons for the latter option focusing on better class interaction, active participation, task comprehension and achievement, learning motivation and positive attitude towards the learning process.

The values obtained for the engagement aspect regarding ESP classes reveal that 65.2% of the students considered themselves as being much and very much active during on-site ESP classes and 52.2% during online ESP classes. However, despite this noticeable engagement degree difference, the comparative frequency data expose a more balanced view, with 36.4% for a better online ESP classes engagement, 31.8% for a better on-site ESP classes engagement and 31.8% for both.

Educational Environment, Media and Teacher Support

When evaluating the influence of the learning environment on the efficiency of the learning process, 50% of the students admitted that the physical environment is necessary and very necessary when it comes to high learning efficiency levels, whereas only 36.4% thought the same for its online counterpart. Nonetheless, 40.9% of the students considered the former to be moderately important and 50% had the same opinion about the latter. In addition, 59.1% of the students feel comfortable and very comfortable while attending ESP classes in a physical environment and 27.3% of the students feel equally moderately comfortable, comfortable and very comfortable with the online environment.

According to the data recorded in the case of class management techniques, 50% of the students stated that they mostly worked in pairs during the on-site ESP classes, 36.4%, individually and 13.6% in groups, whereas in the case of online ESP classes everybody worked individually. However, this result is more likely related to the educational platform implemented by the faculty, a platform that did not allow pair and/or group work in its early implementation stages.

The last aspect to be tackled under section 4 refers to the media and materials used during ESP classes and the teacher support needed and provided. Thus, 57.1% of the students confirmed the usage of a combination of printed materials, online exercises, specialized sites, online apps and platforms in the on-site ESP classes, 33% assessed that mostly printed materials were used in the same situation, 70% admitted that the above-mentioned combination was employed in the online ESP classes, whereas 30% considered that mostly apps and platforms were similarly used. It is therefore underlined the fact that the online environment has greatly improved the variety of educational technology and specialized sites, contributing to the improvement of students’ engagement and motivation levels.

In what concerns the teacher’s support, 23.8% stated that they needed it during on-site ESP classes, 42.9% during online ESP classes and 33.3% during both. During on-site ESP classes, 52.4% needed content-related support and 47.6% task-related support, while during online ESP classes 61.9% needed task-related support, 28.6% media-related support and 9.5% content-related support.
Assessment

Applying the fairness criterion on the assessment process, 82.6% of the students agreed that on-site evaluation was fair (17.4%) and highly fair (65.2%) while 69.5% thought the same in the case of online evaluation; for the assessment accuracy criterion, the on-site ESP classes gathered 81.8% of the answers with accurate and highly accurate gradients, while the same gradients totaled a percentage of 60.9% for online ESP classes (as in Figure 3).

![Figure 3. Assessment fairness (on-site, online) and assessment accuracy (on-site and online)](image)

When asked to take into consideration all the previous aspects comprised by the questionnaire and decide what the future of ESP classes should be, 39.1% of the students chose the online option, 34.8%, the on-site option and 26.1%, both (as in Figure 4). As it can be easily noticed, the values for the online and on-site are quite close, the balance tilting in favor of the online ESP classes.

![Figure 4. Students' choice for ESP classes](image)

CONCLUSIONS

A summary of the research data analysis focuses on several aspects. The use of specialization-related materials is positively adjusted towards the online ESP classes. Frequency usage of skill-related tasks shows more balanced values between on-site and online ESP classes: reading comprehension – 47.8% on-site – very frequently used; listening comprehension – 47.8% online, frequently used; speaking – 47.8% on-site&online, very frequently used; writing - 43.5% online, moderately used; project-based – 30.4%, online, less frequently used; one can notice the fact that the online environment, in the students’ opinion, is better suited to listening comprehension and writing tasks, whereas the on-site environment, to reading comprehension tasks; speaking tasks have equal positive values and project-based tasks have similar low values, no matter the environment. Skill-related task usefulness places the productive skills (speaking and writing) on the first place, closely followed by the receptive skills (reading and listening comprehension) while both educational environments are equally useful for the students from this point of view. Identically distributed options are assigned to on-site&online in the case of class attendance/connectivity and the students considered that their task access and achievement were not influenced by the environment. In terms of schedule flexibility, the online is agreed upon as being the more manageable. Although in the case of the students’ motivation there is a very slight general preference for the online, the values for their activity engagement drift drastically towards the on-site ESP classes. Half of the students decided that the physical learning environment is important in determining the efficiency of their learning process and only a third of them thought the same about the online learning environment; the same values are attached to the students’ level of learning comfortability. Class management strategies suffer greatly during online ESP classes, mostly because of external limitations that have now been removed (the use of educational platforms that did not allow for pair and group work). The combination of online exercises, specialized sites, online apps and platforms is clearly the norm for the online ESP classes. Assessment is evaluated as being better conducted, in terms of fairness and accuracy, during on-site ESP classes.
Overall, even if the students’ answers are relatively balanced in terms of on-site/online, when asked to choose the future educational environment for the ESP classes, the majority agreed that the online environment is the most suitable. However, there are also some research limitations that include the number of students answering the questionnaire, the fact that two specializations were not represented in the collected data and that the research targets only one academic year, although this aspect is externally determined by the pandemic contextualization. Moreover, the use of the term “on-site ESP classes” is formally unfitting as this type of classes were not perceived as such before the beginning of March 2020. It has been employed in this study in order to better clarify the distinction in educational environment and specific methodologies and to easily follow results analysis discussions.

There are three main further research topics that arise from this article. The first one refers to the fact that, according to the questionnaire data, students feel more comfortable attending ESP classes in a physical environment, although they are considered digitally-native and live in a highly technological world doubled by an ever-growing virtual space, especially in the pandemic context. It would be revealing to determine and study the possible causes of such an option. The second topic takes into account the fact that 61.9% of the students considered that they needed more task-related support during online ESP classes, much more than in the case of the on-site ESP classes. It would be worth investigating where the causes of such a situation reside and which are the particular insecurities generated by the educational use of the online environment. The last aspect revolves around tracking the main reason or reasons why the students favor the online environment for their future ESP classes, even if their answers were balanced throughout the questionnaire.

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Conflicts of Interest
The author of the present paper was an ESP associate professor at the same university where the students who answered the questionnaire were enrolled.

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