EXPLORING UNIVERSITY ESP TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT COURSE EVALUATION

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Abstract. The paper examines tertiary English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers' experiences and perceptions of course evaluation within a contemporary theoretical framework. It aims to determine the evaluation impetus, identify gaps in the dissemination of evaluation results, provide insight into teachers' beliefs about their evaluation competencies and needs, and address their concerns and suggestions for the evaluation process. The study was motivated by the expanding influence of ESP courses, criticism of current evaluation practices initiated by universities, and lack of research in the field. The purpose was to deepen understanding of the evaluation process among teachers and other relevant parties and to obtain teachers' recommendations for enhancing the evaluation capacity of the above-mentioned groups, which ultimately contributes to educational excellence and student success. The sample comprised 43 ESP teachers from private and state institutions of higher education in Serbia, who completed an electronic questionnaire. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while thematic content analysis was employed for the qualitative data. The results indicate that course evaluation is still not fully accepted as a regular procedure at the tertiary level in Serbia, since not all institutions initiate it and there is an obvious gap in communication of the results. Yet, teachers generally consider evaluation an essential component of an ESP course and require training opportunities for broadening their knowledge and developing the skills relevant for the effective administration of course evaluation. The pedagogical implications of the study underscore the necessity of teachers' professional development, the alignment of evaluation procedures with pedagogical realities, and the enhancement of cooperation with institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

Introduction

In order to benefit from the educational opportunities created by the internationalization of universities (e.g., student mobility programs) and enhance their employability and successful pursuit of career in the globalized labor market, students nowadays require highly developed competencies in the area of languages for specific purposes (LSP). This is particularly true for English, as this language "gained a privileged position in that it has become the established language of science and technology, and of late […] of business" (Räisänen & Fortanet-Gómez, 2008). Taking into account the dynamic nature of LSP and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) due to technological, scientific, and economic developments, as well as the "changing trends in approaches and methodologies" in terms of pedagogies (Kırkgöz & Dikilitaş, 2018, p. 3), it is necessary to continuously review language courses so as to ensure that they respond both to these changes and to students' demands. This idea aligns with the principles of the Bologna process and the educational reform, which place the issue of quality assurance at the forefront of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017; Milutinović, 2023). As a result, "all European countries have established national quality assurance systems and many higher education institutions have developed their own strategies for quality enhancement" (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017).

One form of evaluation most closely linked to teaching practices at many European universities, including Serbian ones, is the end-of-course student survey assessing the academic staff (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017). Although this instrument reviews certain course elements, such as materials and lecture delivery, and is generally perceived as useful by university teachers (Janković & Jarić, 2009), several problems have been identified related to its design and impact: it mainly assesses operational and technical issues and offers limited formative information for improving and innovating the syllabi and instruction, evaluation results often remain unused, and there is the question of credibility, reliability, and bias of student responses (Davis & McKay, 2018; Janković & Jarić, 2009; Norris, 2016; Миленовић, 2015). Additionally, the same evaluation form is

used for all university courses, thus failing to capture discipline-specific features, which is crucial for making concrete and meaningful course improvements. Therefore, not only are educators who strive to gain more relevant pedagogical feedback mostly left to their own devices, but the issue of evaluation as a tool for transforming educational practices also remains under-researched in Serbia. In the field of ESP, for example, studies have addressed the evaluation of course materials, tasks, and student achievement (Đurić, 1998; Manić, 2016; Stojković, 2012), but none have conducted a comprehensive investigation of course evaluation. Therefore, to fill the gap, we decided to examine tertiary ESP teachers' experiences and perceptions regarding course evaluation within the contemporary theoretical and empirical framework so as to gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of their current evaluation practices, identify concerns, and gather recommendations for conducting the evaluation procedure. Since the issue of evaluation methodology has already been covered by the authors (Vidaković et al., 2022), this paper focuses on other key topics such as the impetus of evaluation, the dissemination of results, and teachers' evaluation competencies. The obtained findings will help identify areas of need and offer recommendations for improving the evaluation capacity of teachers. Although the results may not be broadly applicable, they offer valuable insight for all foreign language educators seeking to obtain a deeper understanding of this process and related competencies, which may eventually lead to the creation of more impactful courses.

Theoretical and Empirical Insights into Evaluation Practices

The contemporary perception of evaluation emerged in the 1980s and 1990s (Beretta, 1986; Lynch, 1996; Patton, 1997; Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992), when authors recognized the importance of internal evaluation, in addition to external evaluation. While the latter is mainly related to accreditation and accountability purposes, the former places emphasis on formative aspects and is more closely associated with the actual teaching practices, curriculum, and professional development. The expansion of evaluation functions, which encompassed accountability, developmental, awareness-raising, management, and other aspects, called for the adoption of multiple methodologies, the triangulation of data sources, and the involvement of a variety of stakeholders, thus making the process increasingly dynamic (Norris, 2009; Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1998).

The construct has continued to evolve in the 21st century. This period has witnessed an increase in publications addressing theoretical and methodological issues, offering practical guidelines, and illustrating case studies from a variety of contexts (Davis & McKay, 2018; Gorsuch, 2009; Gruba, 2024; Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005; Loh et al., 2023; Norris, 2016; Patton & Campbell-Patton, 2021;

Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014; Watanabe et al., 2009). Several theory-based evaluation approaches have been developed, among which the participatory approach (Cousins, 2003) and utilization-focused approach (Patton, 1997, 2008; Patton & Campbell-Patton, 2021) have gained prominence, additionally emphasizing the pragmatic orientation of evaluation practices.

By incorporating the contemporary perspective on evaluation, which "embraces multiple purposes, methodological pluralism, and a pragmatic focus on usefulness" (Norris, 2016, p. 170), the definition adopted in this paper defines the construct as "the gathering of information about any of the variety of elements that constitute an educational program, for a variety of purposes that primarily include understanding, demonstrating, improving, and judging program value" (Norris, 2016, p. 170). Such evaluation "prioritizes the gathering of locally useful information for answering priority questions about language programs and helping stakeholders and decision-makers resolve immediate challenges" (Norris, 2016, p. 174). The adopted approach highlights the authors' emphasis on the formative aspects of evaluation which is directly linked to the pedagogical context.

What follows in this section is a review of the literature focused on the topics central to this research, such as evaluation impetus (whether external or internal), the dissemination of evaluation results, evaluation competencies, and the concerns and suggestions associated with currently employed evaluation procedures.

The analysis of studies addressing the nature and effects of externally mandated evaluation—performed for accreditation and administration purposes—as well as internal or teacher-driven evaluation, more closely related to pedagogical concerns and developmental purposes (Burden, 2008; Davis & McKay, 2018; Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005; Prieto et al., 2023; Watanabe et al., 2009), reveals a shift in emphasis towards the latter. Yet, research on practice has indicated that university administration and accreditation pressures are still the prevailing impetuses for conducting course evaluation, which is not surprising, in light of global trends in higher education (Borch et al., 2021; Watanabe et al., 2009). Davis et al. (2009, p. 218) state that "in such top-down initiatives, the usefulness of evaluation findings can often become de-emphasized and geared more toward data extraction." Similar views are echoed in Burden's (2008) study, where teacher respondents described such evaluation as superficial and lacking in credibility and utility. Furthermore, they highlighted the narrow scope regarding teaching practices and reported "a lack of both buy-in and follow-through" (Assessment and Evaluation Language Resource Center [AELRC], 2024). On the other hand, many authors have documented examples of teacher-led evaluations which proved to be more responsive to the realities of language teachers and language education (Dassier & Powell, 2001; Norris, 2009; Yang, 2009). According to Youker (2018, p. 857), they "promote utilization of evaluation findings, reflective practice and organizational learning." This type of evaluation is viewed as an integral part of a foreign language program (Anthony, 2018; Flowerdew, 2013; Richards, 2001;

Tsou & Chen, 2014), alongside needs analysis, course design, material selection/production, etc. Finally, it is worth highlighting Kiely and Rea-Dickins' observation (2005, in AELRC, 2024) that evaluations are effective when "they are linked with pedagogic concerns, teachers perceive a need for change and/or perceive evaluation as an opportunity for improvement, and there is sufficient time and teachers are involved in quality management."

The question of evaluation impetus is closely related to the dissemination of results. This is in line with Norris' view (2009, p. 11) that program evaluation was for a long time perceived "as something that is apart from language education, largely external to doing effective language teaching, exclusively measurement-driven, highly summative and judgemental in orientation." Such a perception often led to a failure to communicate evaluation results to relevant stakeholders.

Bearing this in mind, Birckbichler (2006), Davis (2018), Norris (2009), and Stufflebeam and Coryn (2014) highlight the importance of discussing evaluation information in a timely manner. Employing this practice in a clear, consistent, meaningful, and non-threatening way—using a variety of communication methods (presentations, social media, shared reports, etc.)—may greatly facilitate understanding of the language teaching program, ensure program improvement where necessary, and raise awareness of the benefits of conducting the evaluation. Furthermore, as proposed by Stufflebeam and Coryn (2014, p. 15), "effective reporting sets the stage for applying the evaluation findings." Borch (2020) and Borch et al. (2021) draw attention to consultations and dialogues on evaluation findings involving various stakeholders, which ensure that evaluation becomes a tool for reflection and learning, beyond representing merely a meaningless ritual. Borch et al. (2021, p. 4) also note that students participating in evaluation dialogues reported that it "increased their awareness about their own learning processes and helped them develop their communication skills."

Evaluation competencies are another crucial issue in the literature. Due to the complex and dynamic nature of evaluation and its implementation, there is a need for continuous training. Patton (2013), Patton and Campbell-Patton, (2021), and Stufflebeam and Coryn (2014) list a range of competencies necessary for effective program evaluation. They encompass knowledge of relevant evaluation concepts, techniques, and approaches, as well as the ability to use them appropriately within a given context. Furthermore, competencies in research design, measurement, statistics, communication, reflective practice, and the like are emphasized. According to Llosa and Slayton (2009) and Theall and Franklin (2001), these competencies will not only help evaluators successfully administer evaluation, but also ensure that they can interpret the data accurately, comprehend the reasons behind the outcomes, and propose actionable recommendations.

Research has, however, shown that a deficiency in evaluation competencies and a lack of training are the major obstacles that hinder the evaluation process (Borch et al., 2021; Davis, 2018; Gruba, 2024; Norris, 2016; Stufflebeam & Coryn,

2014; Theall & Franklin, 2001; Watanabe et al., 2009). This highlights the need to build the evaluation capacity of educators through attending workshops and conferences, disseminating examples of good practice, and engaging in actual evaluation planning, conducting, and reporting. Davis et al. (2009) suggest that increased awareness and interest in evaluation in the field of foreign languages will, in turn, increase demand for professional development opportunities.

Evaluators face multiple challenges in planning and implementing course evaluation, as documented in Davis et al. (2009), Gruba (2024), Kiely and Rea-Dickins (2005), Norris (2009, 2016), Stufflebeam and Coryn (2014), Watanabe et al. (2009), and other studies. The following recurring issues have been identified: a lack of competencies in clearly defining evaluation uses, selecting and appropriately applying methodologies and approaches, and ensuring the dissemination and utilization of the obtained findings. Patton and Campbell-Patton (2021), Norris (2009), and Watanabe et al. (2009) also identify time constraints, disinterest, and "a general lack of awareness of language educators about the possible contributions to be made by thorough-going and intentional approaches to evaluation" (Norris, 2009, p. 11). These authors note that mandated methodologies are not always aligned with the realities of educational programs, resulting in the perception that course evaluation is a waste of time and pure bureaucracy. The prevailing suggestions for improving evaluation practices and experiences emanate from the aforementioned challenges and relate to enhancing the evaluation capacity of educators by providing training opportunities and resources (Borch et al., 2021; Davis et al., 2009; Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014). The latter refers to making available instruments, procedures, and concrete examples of evaluation which are tailored to the context of foreign language teaching (Watanabe et al., 2009). The importance of raising awareness and fostering motivation has also been emphasized, as these are closely tied to the need to "transform evaluation into a useful endeavor" (Watanabe et al., 2009, p. 16) which targets language program understanding and improvement.

Research Methodology

The present study was conducted with ESP university teachers from Serbia to examine the strengths and weaknesses of their evaluation practices, their attitudes towards this process, and their beliefs about their evaluation competencies and needs, all considered within a contemporary theoretical and empirical framework. To this end, the research addressed the following specific tasks:

• determining the evaluation impetus ("Is evaluation institutionally or personally driven?");

• identifying gaps in the evaluation procedure regarding dissemination of evaluation findings;

• investigating teachers' beliefs about their evaluation needs in terms of evaluation competencies;

• examining teachers' opinions, concerns, and suggestions regarding the evaluation process.

Furthermore, the study aimed to examine whether statistically significant differences exist in responses according to ESP teachers' career length and their attitudes towards the evaluation process, competencies, and needs.[4] The obtained results are expected to contribute to a better understanding of the evaluation construct and the importance and manner of its implementation. They will also provide specific recommendations for enhancing the evaluation capacity of teachers and other relevant parties.

Participants. The research involved 43 ESP teachers affiliated with both private and state higher education institutions in Serbia (Novi Sad, Belgrade, Niš, Kragujevac, and Kosovska Mitrovica). The sample is considered appropriate in terms of size and geographical distribution, given the relatively small tertiary-level ESP community. Of the respondents, 40 were female and 3 male, reflecting the gender distribution typical of this field. The respondents' ages ranged from 34 to 66, with an average of 46.16 years (mean value). At the time of the research, the surveyed participants had taught ESP for between 10 and 32 years, with a mean of 20.1 years, indicating substantial pedagogical experience among the participants.

Research instrument. In order to gather relevant data, an anonymous electronic questionnaire was administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section included questions on demographic data (gender, age, affiliation, and length of teaching career). The second section focused on the key research issues, formulated based on previous studies (Davis & McKay, 2018; Morgan, 2008; Watanabe et al., 2009). This section contained three multiple-choice questions, each with an "Other" option that allowed respondents to provide their own responses:

• Who initiates course evaluation at your institution?[5]

• Do you receive feedback on course evaluation results if it is externally initiated?

• Who do you share the results of course evaluation with?

The following question included five statements, rated by participants on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*:

• Course evaluation should be an essential component of every ESP course.

• I am familiar with course evaluation research and theory.

• My current evaluation practices are in line with the desired ones.[6]

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[4] We did not investigate the distribution of answers in terms of respondents' sex, as women constituted the great majority of the sample (93%).

[5] The provided response options are presented in the Results and Discussion section.

[6] The phrase *desired ones* refers to practices which are aligned with current research and are suitable for the specific teaching context.

• I need additional training to perform course evaluation effectively.

• Course evaluation is a time-consuming process to be carried out regularly.

In the final open-ended question, the respondents were invited to share their concerns and suggestions regarding the ESP course evaluation process.

Data analysis. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including the mean, minimum, and maximum values for numerical data, as well as the distribution of responses, compared using the nonparametric Fisher's exact test (teachers' beliefs/attitudes according to the length of their teaching career). The obtained percentages were calculated based on all responses to the three multiple-choice questions, and the results are presented as proportions of the total (100%). The qualitative data obtained from the open-ended question were analyzed using thematic content analysis. The answers were coded and categorized around common themes. Both quantitative and qualitative results enabled the authors to identify general patterns. Qualitative findings additionally provided deeper insight into the research issues, confirming and clarifying the quantitative data. Nine respondents who had not conducted course evaluation were excluded from the analysis of course evaluation experience. However, their attitudes, suggestions, and concerns were still considered in terms of the study's pedagogical implications.

Results and Discussion

The first question in the research questionnaire ("Who initiates course evaluation?") examined whether course evaluation in Serbia is institutionally initiated, as prescribed by official regulations and strategies for quality enhancement, or driven by teachers or other parties. Respondents could choose more than one answer. The obtained results showed that approximately half of the respondents (51%) conducted course evaluation on their own initiative, 42% reported that it was institutionally initiated, and 7% stated that evaluation was initiated in another manner, although the exact impetus was unclear.

Such responses suggest that course evaluation is not fully accepted as a regular procedure at the institutional level in Serbia. On the other hand, the fact that a significant percentage of ESP teachers initiate course evaluation independently is encouraging. It indicates that they recognize its importance for pedagogical practice and professional growth. Some of these teachers (24%) undertake evaluation alongside institutionally required procedures. This may be because, as noted in the theoretical section, institutionally mandated evaluations have been criticized for not providing sufficient information to make informed decisions about the actual language course and teaching. Therefore, to gain relevant pedagogical insights, some educators rely on their own evaluation efforts, either as the sole method or as a complement to their institution's evaluation process. Overall, these findings

suggest the need to raise awareness and understanding of the evaluation process and to ensure that it is conducted in a way that meets both broader educational requirements and specific teacher needs.

The following question examined whether teachers receive feedback from externally initiated course evaluations ("Do you receive feedback on course evaluation results if it is externally initiated?"). Only answers from participants who had undergone external evaluation were considered.

The distribution of responses indicates that only 10% of respondents receive the full course evaluation report, whereas 20% do not receive any feedback. In addition, 50% reported that they receive feedback only upon request (e.g., for election or promotion purposes), while 20% receive only a general score without specific details. These findings align with those of the previous question (the implementation of externally initiated evaluation), indicating that evaluation is underdeveloped and not fully established as a standard procedure at universities in Serbia. Similar findings—showing that higher education institutions are often held accountable for unsuccessful evaluation—have been reported by Borch et al. (2021) and Janković and Jarić (2009).

Comprehensive feedback is obtained only through full course evaluation reports, which include students' answers to open-ended questions addressing the strengths, weaknesses, and concerns regarding a specific course and its teacher (including course materials/literature and the teaching process), and proposals for possible improvements. The absence of such feedback at Serbian universities suggests that course evaluation is still not a systematic procedure enabling participants in the education process to respond effectively to educational needs. This implementation gap might also explain why many teachers perceive evaluation "merely as a ritual in quality" (Borch et al., 2021, p. 12).

One of the crucial aspects of course evaluation feedback is the dissemination of results by teachers to relevant stakeholders (other teachers, students, superiors, etc.), which was explored with the next multiple-choice question ("Who do you share the results of course evaluation with?").

Almost half of the respondents (48%) share course evaluation results with other teachers. This supports the observation that "teachers are important informants on whether courses are meeting students' needs and in helping the program gauge learner autonomy and learning transfer, because they have direct access to students" (Tsou & Chen, 2014, p. 51). Moreover, course evaluation results are shared with teachers' superiors—the head of department or dean (23%), students (23%), and potential future student employers (6%). The most frequent combination of responses was sharing with *other teachers* and *students* (20%), followed by sharing with *other teachers* and *superiors* (14%). Discussing these data with superiors may enable improvements in the teaching process at the respective institution and support the development of strategies to attract more students. On the other hand, sharing course evaluation results with other teachers and

students may support teacher development, offer insights into students' needs and attitudes requiring greater evaluative attention (as explained by Watanabe et al., 2009), and enhance students' understanding of the learning process (Borch et al., 2021). In line with this view, Borch et al. (2021, p. 180) particularly emphasize the need for "establishing meaningful dialogues about educational quality and student evaluation at the university," which should include various stakeholders.

The third aim of this research was to examine teachers' beliefs about evaluation competencies and determine whether additional training in evaluation procedures is needed. The results are presented in Figure 1, showing the responses to both questions on a five-point Likert scale.
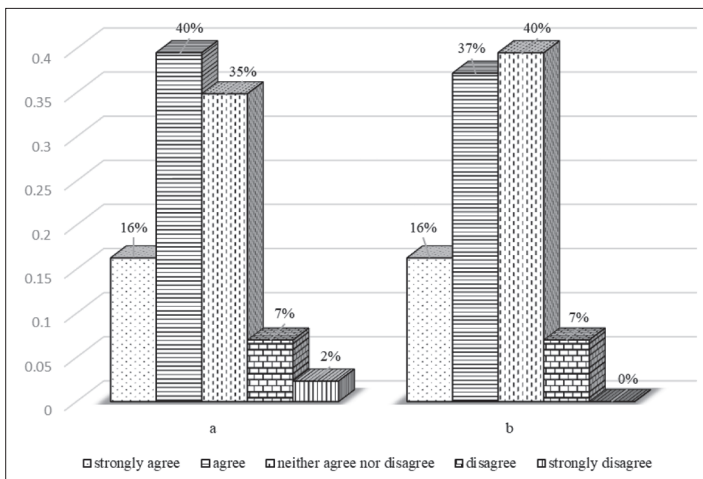

Fig. 1. Descriptive statistics for statements:
a) I am familiar with course evaluation research and theory.
b) I need additional training to perform course evaluation effectively.

The presented data show that slightly over half of the teachers (56%) are familiar with course evaluation research and theory, with 16% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing. This aligns with the finding that 53% of respondents believe that they need additional training to perform course evaluation effectively, with 16% strongly agreeing and 37% agreeing. The fact that a significant percentage of respondents chose the "neither agree nor disagree" option for both statements (35% and 40%, respectively) may suggest that teachers recognize the importance of course evaluation but are unable to accurately assess their current level of evaluation competence and/or needs. Comparison of the response distributions revealed no significant difference in teachers' beliefs regarding statement a ("I am familiar with course evaluation research and theory") and statement b ("I need additional training to perform course evaluation effectively") in relation to the length of their teaching careers (p = 0.76376 and p = 0.27083, respectively).

These findings align with observations by Abrami (2001), Stufflebeam and Coryn (2014), Theall and Franklin (2001), Watanabe et al. (2009), and others, indicating that both teachers and administrators often lack a general understanding of course evaluation procedures. This gap has led to calls for "more knowledge about evaluation—in other words, evaluation competence" (Borch, 2020, p. 9).

Developing evaluation competencies not only facilitates the planning and conducting of evaluation, but also enables more accurate interpretation of data and a better comprehension of the "reasons for certain outcomes" (Llosa & Slayton, 2009), ultimately leading to relevant and applicable recommendations. Educators do not need in-depth expertise in statistical analysis; however, they require a basic understanding of how statistical tools function and what they can and cannot measure. One way to address this knowledge gap is to incorporate some basic evaluation theory and skills into formal education or professional development programs for higher education teachers, since these are nowadays rarely included in teachers' tertiary professional training, including the *Catalogue of Professional Development Programmes for Employees in Education* (Кулић & Костић Минић, 2022).

The final objective of this research was to explore teachers' opinions, concerns, and suggestions regarding the evaluation process within an ESP course. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements using a five-point Likert scale (Figure 2). The following bar graph presents the distribution of teachers' responses to three selected statements.
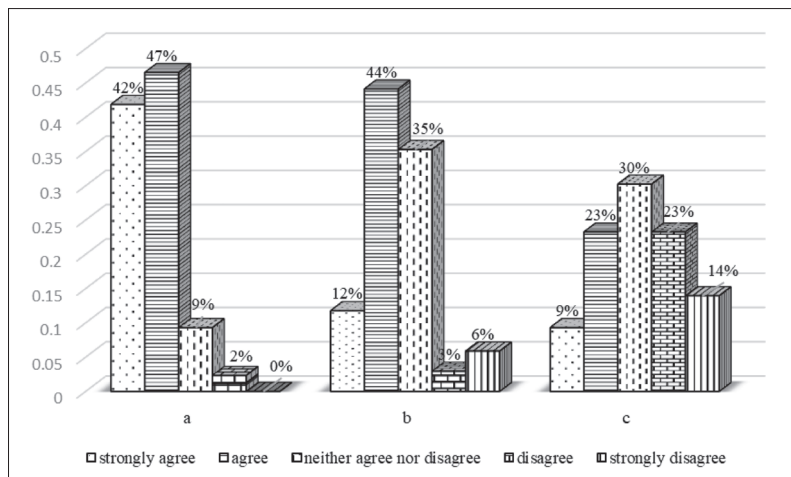

Fig. 2. Descriptive statistics for statements:
a) Course evaluation should be an essential component of every ESP course.
b) My current evaluation practices are in line with the desired ones.
c) Course evaluation is a time-consuming process to be carried out regularly.

The results obtained for statement a ("Course evaluation should be an essential component of every ESP course") provide insight into teachers' perceptions of the importance of course evaluation. The vast majority of respondents consider course evaluation a crucial component of every ESP course (42% strongly agree and 47% agree). This result is in accordance with theoretical perspectives in the field of ESP (Anthony, 2018; Flowerdew, 2013; Tsou & Chen, 2014), as well as the findings obtained by Janković and Jarić (2009), who conducted research at the University of Belgrade by interviewing teachers. Their study highlights that course evaluation is a key indicator of both teaching quality and students' opinions, and as such, it should be taken into account when considering teachers' future career trajectories. The results related to teachers' evaluation practices suggest that half of the respondents are either uncertain or believe that their evaluation practices are not aligned with recommended approaches. This reinforces earlier findings regarding teachers' evaluation competencies and underscores the need to strengthen their evaluation capacity. Moreover, approximately one-third of teachers view course evaluation as time-consuming or are uncertain about it, while slightly more than one-third disagree with that perception. Time constraints are often cited as one of the main challenges in conducting effective course evaluations (Borch, 2020; Tsou & Chen, 2014). Addressing such concerns at the institutional level, for example, could positively influence the motivation to conduct evaluations and enhance their overall effectiveness.

A comparison of response distributions revealed no significant differences in teachers' beliefs regarding statements a ("Course evaluation should be an essential component of every ESP course"), b ("My current evaluation practices are in line with the desired ones"), and c ("Course evaluation is a time-consuming process to be carried out regularly") based on the length of their teaching careers ($p = 0.21196$, $p = 0.69329$, and $p = 0.12124$, respectively).

In order to gain deeper insight into the evaluation process, a thematic content analysis of teachers' concerns and suggestions was conducted. Twenty-six participants shared their views, and the following issues emerged:

- Lack of competence: "I think teachers should be informed about course evaluation research and theory (they generally know very little about it, including myself)"; "[It is] tricky to adapt existing questionnaires to specific needs, [there is] a lack of training in general evaluation methodology."

- Scarce literature: "The literature on ESP course evaluation is still scarce"; "I did not come across evaluation literature in Serbia."

- Lack of impact: "[It is] time-consuming, not relevant to superiors, and has little influence on adding external value to the course under evaluation"; "[It is] often seen as merely red tape."

Respondents emphasized the need for training in evaluation procedures and highlighted the importance of clearly communicating the purpose of evaluation to students, as this could enhance the quality of their responses ("ESP teachers

should be well informed of the existing theory and other teachers' practices"; "When students evaluate the course, there are usually some discrepancies in their views and the overall mark they give to the course. In most cases, this is due to different levels of their English proficiency"). Teachers also underscored the importance of using tailor-made evaluation forms for ESP courses, rather than the current practice of using standardized instruments ("[Evaluation forms] should be tailor-made"), and of the systematic implementation of evaluation by all teachers ("[Teachers] should carry out course evaluation regularly"). Respondents particularly stressed the value of utilizing ESP course evaluation results to identify necessary course adjustments and to verify whether the course meets its predefined objectives ("Without a doubt, evaluation has a significant role in ensuring the continuous improvement of any course, including ESP courses, which are included in language teaching programs to satisfy a particular need. Evaluating an ESP course helps to establish whether it is meeting its aims or not").

In general, respondents demonstrated a clear awareness of the importance of course evaluation as an integral part to every teaching process, aimed at ensuring continuous improvement. These results align with existing research (Borsch et al., 2021; Davis et al., 2009; Gruba, 2024; Norris, 2016; Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014; Watanabe et al., 2009), highlighting the need for greater institutional recognition, support, and capacity building.

Conclusion

This paper investigates teachers' practices and beliefs regarding the evaluation of ESP courses at the tertiary level in Serbia. The study was motivated by the growing prominence of ESP courses, criticism of the current evaluation practices mandated by universities, and the lack of research in the field. By analyzing ESP teachers' experiences and perspectives within a contemporary theoretical and empirical framework, the study identifies current issues and needs related to evaluation implementation and competencies.

Overall, the results obtained align with existing research, underscoring the need to give greater attention to this issue.

It can be concluded that course evaluation is still not fully established as a regular procedure at the tertiary level in Serbia, which is reflected in the fact that not all institutions initiate it, and even when they do, there is a gap in the communication of the results. At the same time, the data reveal that teachers generally consider evaluation an essential component of an ESP course, and many conduct it individually, suggesting that it is valued as a tool for enhancing both teaching and learning quality. However, this also highlights a lack of institutional responsiveness to teachers' actual practices and professional needs. The findings, therefore, imply the need for greater cooperation among higher education

institutions, teachers, and other relevant stakeholders. By aligning evaluation procedures with pedagogical realities and establishing concrete feedback procedures (e.g., identifying evaluation feedback recipients, determining methods of result dissemination, etc.), evaluation can become a process which is not perceived as mere bureaucracy, but as a meaningful tool promoting professional practice and growth. As such, it may also enhance students' understanding of their own learning processes and facilitate more informative communication with teachers and other educational stakeholders.

The analysis further indicates that educators need to be provided with training opportunities to broaden their knowledge and develop the skills necessary for the effective administration of course evaluation. Fundamental principles of course evaluation should also be incorporated into formal university education. The issue of the evaluation knowledge gap has been a recurring theme in research, suggesting that a lack of proper competencies may affect the selection of appropriate methodology, data interpretation, understanding of underlying factors influencing specific outcomes, and the provision of actionable recommendations.

Another important issue highlighted by the study concerns time constraints. It must be acknowledged that course evaluation requires a significant amount of time, and failure to account for this may hinder the process. Therefore, institutional support in terms of resources and assistance is essential. Providing tools such as tailor-made forms, statistical analysis software, etc., as well as allocating time within teachers' schedules to conduct evaluation, could facilitate the evaluation process and improve its effectiveness.

This research has several limitations. Focusing on ESP teachers' beliefs, the study is exploratory in nature, providing an initial understanding of the examined issue and indicating whether further investigation is justified. The sample comprises only ESP teachers, and its size may not be representative of the wider ESP teaching community, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Nevertheless, the study sheds light on the construct of evaluation and offers a better understanding of the key aspects integral to the evaluation process. Moreover, the analysis may encourage teachers and other educators to reflect on their own evaluation practices and competencies, empowering them to identify ways to enhance their evaluation capacity.

Further investigation is required to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. For example, more detailed research into teachers' specific evaluation practices would provide deeper insight into their evaluation capacity and, in turn, offer concrete guidelines for training programs. Additionally, the research design and findings can serve as a foundation for exploring evaluation-related topics in other fields.

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Резиме

У раду се испитују искуства и перцепције универзитетских наставника енглеског језика струке у вези са евалуацијом наставног предмета у савременом теоријском оквиру како би се утврдио подстицај за евалуацију, идентификовали недостаци у погледу дисеминације резултата евалуације, испитале потребе наставника у смислу јачања компетенција и сагледали проблеми и сугестије у вези са процесом евалуације. Анализа је мотивисана све већим утицајем предмета енглеског језика струке, критиком тренутне праксе евалуације на универзитетима и недовољном истраженошћу ове области. Испитивање има за циљ продубљивање разумевања процеса евалуације и јачање компетенција наставника и других учесника у образовном процесу за њено спровођење, што на крају доприноси изврсности у образовању и успеху студената. Узорак обухвата 43 наставника са приватних и државних високошколских установа у Србији, који су попуњавали електронски упитник. Квантитативни подаци су анализирани путем дескриптивне статистике и непараметријског Фишеровог теста, а квалитативни употребом тематске анализе садржаја. Налази су показали да евалуација наставних предмета још увек није у потпуности прихваћена као редовна процедура на терцијарном нивоу у Србији,

јер је не иницирају све институције и постоје очигледне мањкавости у процесу саопштавања резултата. Упркос томе, подаци указују да наставници евалуацију сматрају кључном компонентом предмета енглеског језика струке, те да им треба пружити могућност обуке за стицање знања и вештина релевантних за њено ефикасно спровођење. Педагошке импликације истраживања указују на потребу за професионалним развојем наставника, усклађивањем процедура евалуације са педагошком реалношћу и унапређењем сарадње са институцијама и другим заинтересованим странама.

Кључне речи: евалуација предмета; енглески језик струке; евалуација на терцијарном нивоу; компетенције наставника у вези са евалуацијом предмета.