EXPLORING PEDAGOGICAL CHALLENGES OF ESP TEACHERS AT A SAUDI ARABIAN UNIVERSITY

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ⓘD **Dalal Alsharif**[1,+]
ⓘD **Nadia Shukri**[2]

[1]Umm Al-Qura University, Saudi Arabia
[2]King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia

(+ Corresponding author:)

ABSTRACT

English language is increasingly becoming an important communication tool worldwide, being studied for different reasons and needs, which explains the emergency of English for special purpose programs (ESP). This study investigated the perceptions of teachers towards issues related to the pedagogy in teaching ESP courses at the Saudi Arabian University. As such, a mixed quantitative and qualitative research approach was used to collect data from 50 ESP teachers. The results revealed that all the respondents were qualified enough to teach ESP. However, in terms of teaching challenges, the ESP teachers appeared to be inadequately prepared for the job, since they lacked ESP teaching skills and knowledge, which lead to limited ESP teaching capabilities. Therefore, professional training should complement academic training for quality ESP teaching and learning outcomes. Moreover, most teachers lacked skill development courses since they joined the current institution, which suggested the need for teacher development programs to prepare ESP teachers in areas of knowledge development and right instructional language command. In this light, future studies should focus on ascertaining factors that determine the teachers' choices of pedagogic strategies in teaching ESP courses and those that influence learners to pursue ESP in universities and educational institutions.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Emergence of ESP

ESP increased its popularity all over the world, which was also determined by the accelerated growth of students learning English all over the world. Its popularity and development are reflected by the large number of universities offering regular ESP courses, along with graduate and post-graduate courses, not only in the USA and Britain, but all across the world. Saudi Arabian universities are also focusing on such aspects.

According to, exploring teachers' beliefs regarding students' needs can provide an understanding of the existing needs in any prescribed course. Borg (2006) claimed that teachers' beliefs and perceptions are components of a wider concept of teacher cognition, further stating that teachers' beliefs may also offer an awareness of their perception in professional and academic settings, which contributes to their knowledge in teacher training and education. Since learners' needs vary, ESP programs are usually designed with different goals and objectives. also asserted that ESP teachers have different perceptions, as they are usually influenced by different criteria. Research revealed that different demographic characteristics, such as educational background, status, teaching experience, age, and gender, lead teachers to have different perceptions and different expectations of teaching programs. It was also revealed that as their teaching experience increased, the comments made on content knowledge also increased.

Younger teachers with less teaching experience often face challenges, such as working conditions, lack of time, complicated relationships with parents and teachers, workload, and much more. These are often serious issues that impact their deicision to leave within the first three years of working.

ESP teaching should address three common features, consisting of use of genuine and authentic materials, orientation to purposeful activities, and finally, learning should be organized towards self-access. The use of authentic materials in ESP courses is not only considered feasible at intermediate or advanced levels, but it is also useful for research tasks and self-directed learning. Some of the advantages of using authentic material include its positive effect on the student's motivation, its ability to provide authentic cultural information and offer students an exposure to real-life language use, while closely relating to the learner's needs. As such, orientation to purposeful activities entails using communicative tasks that are appropriate to the target setting, while learning organized towards self-access implies a learning structure that allows students to access information whenever they want. Equally, students should be allowed to take an active role in their studies, rather than always reacting to the teachers' instructions. Thus, pedagogical approach has to be shifted from teacher centred classrooms to the learner centred learning.

One of the major features in ESP learning is specialized vocabulary, better known as technical vocabulary, with certain of its attributes encountered at the lexical levels and discourse levels. The scope covered by specialized vocabulary is usually limited. There are two major problems faced by ESP teachers when helping their students learn the technical terminologies. Firstly, most often, the teachers themselves do not have a broad understanding of the specialized subject that they are teaching. Secondly, while teachers have to teach the technical terminologies, they also have to teach general English. argued that the teachers' inadequate understanding of the specialized field and inability to discern can act as a barrier in the communication between the teacher and the students. Despite these limitations, a good teacher will provide the students with the necessary tools for them to carry out their own independent learning. As such, the teacher acts as a facilitator and not as a knowledge provider.

Research in ESP curriculums mostly focused on the effectiveness of teaching materials and the degree to which the teachers and the students are satisfied with the components of the program. Moreover, a research study conducted by Rasekh *et al.* (2011) investigated teachers' and students' view on the necessity, usefulness, and relevance of new ESP materials. Results revealed that more than 70% of the teachers and students in behavioural science courses and engineering had a positive attitude towards the material content. The findings also highlighted that teachers did prefer homogenous classes for class management purposes. Heterogeneous classes were found not to be suitable for students who were far more advanced, while they were confusing for weak students.

Another study performed by sought to determine several issues, among them whether ESP teachers or experts in that certain subject would produce more informed and academically satisfied students. The students were selected based on their results from a certain TOEFL test. They were then divided into two groups. One was taught by an ESP teacher, while the second group was taught by a specialist in the field. At the end of that semester, after the exams/tests were done, the results clearly showed that the students taught by an ESP teacher scored higher in all aspects of the test, from understanding lectures to reading comprehensions, when compared to the group that was taught by a specialist. In this light, despite the specialist being well knowledgeable in the field, he/she did not perform better than the ESP teacher, as he/she lacked the necessary teaching methodologies and linguistic knowledge.

Studies also focused on determining the effectiveness of the EAP curriculum taught by institutions in preparing the students to meet their academic needs. In this case, the study used interviews and questionnaires in order to gather data. The results clearly showed that the EAP curriculum was inadequate in assisting students to meet their academic requirements. The students claimed that they felt as if there was something missing, a gap of sorts between the required level and their current performance. Furthermore, the poor speaking practice they received

inhibited them from frequently interacting with the teachers and participating in class discussions. Students also found it difficult to express their thoughts using the specialist discourse, while written text in the specialist field did not mean much to them. On the other hand, teachers noted that they observed their students were finding it difficult to retain concentration during extended lectures, while they participation was scarce when it came to class discussions. The results of the study showed that there should be a shared responsibility between the subject specialist teachers and the language teachers, in order to help students familiarize themselves with specialized lexical items. The findings also revealed that an overly skill-based EAP curriculum was more ineffective in helping the students achieve their academic requirements.

The above studies led to the conclusion that despite ESP teachers having a difficult time integrating subject content due to their lack of professional knowledge in the given field, their teaching strategies and methodologies make their lessons more comprehensible to their students. Furthermore, the studies also showed that ESP students usually experience learning difficulties which are caused by technical expressions, among other things.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

The foundation of this research study rely on the facilitation theory proposed by . The selected theory for the study has a strong foundation with ESP teaching contexts, where ESP teachers do not act as content specialists, but as facilitators to provide learners with practical learning strategies and support them in identifying their strengths and weaknesses for the improvement of personal values and academic performance. As such, through utilizing this theory one can identify is the existence of a gap between teachers' beliefs and their actual pedagogy in the classroom while teaching ESP courses at a Saudi Arabian University. Thus, in this study, teachers' perceptions regarding the pedagogy in ESP courses can reveal a gap between beliefs and actions, along with the reasons behind the perceived challenges.

Facilitation theory, also referred to as facilitative teaching, entails a humanist approach to learning, proposed in the 1980s by Carl Rogers, an influential American psychologist. Since1940s, one of the areas of interest of Rogers was psychology and psychotherapy, where he used client-centred therapy to help the client perceive the problem through personal eyes. In 1960s Rogers encouraged a similar approach in the educational and learning process. His underlying principle was that people are naturally good and healthy and everyone strives to do the best.

In his work, Rogers addressed two types of learning, such as the rote learning, entailing meaningless memorization of facts and experiential learning in daily life, which has a personal relevance and meaning. The later one is due to natural curiosity and significance of learned material acquired by the active participation of the learner in the learning process and, in most cases, it is self-initiated. Rogers's theory considers that a teacher's role in the learning process is being a facilitator, not walking textbook to transmit its contents. Facilitation occurs by the attitudes of the teacher in the relationship with the learners. In this light, theorists suggested three attitudinal qualities which are essential for facilitative practice, generally referred to as conditions.

Realness implies that the educator should be himself. An educator should be a real person who understands feelings and can communicate these feelings in the right manner. Similarly, prizing, trust, and acceptance imply that the educators should care about the students and accept their feelings, while empathy implies being able to walk in other people shoes. It is also expected from the teachers to understand the perspective of the student in the learning process.

Claimed that the theory pays special attention to the motivation for change human relationships, which further reveals its association to a humanistic approach, while also arguing that people have a tendency and potential to move forward and deal with life constructively and intelligently. Learners are expected to be aware of themselves, to understand their personality and relationship to life in in a more mature manner. This is buried in psychological

defence layers, which are expressed and released in proper conditions. Under such circumstances, a learner becomes well-functioning and a forward moving a person.

One of Rogers' principles is that learning is possible since human beings have an urge to learn and are responsible for learning. Therefore, educators/teachers cannot teach learners directly, but can facilitate the process through using enhanced relationships. He emphasized on the human relationships aspect which helps them become more integrated and socialized. Moreover, change and growth are considered to be benefits associated with human relationships.

In reference to ESP, it is believed that ESP educators should act as content experts in areas where they lack specialized knowledge. Instead, they choose to collaborate with matters experts to seek a good understanding of the areas and facilitate students learning. According to , teachers can also facilitate student learning by negotiating and constructing meaning with learners. They get valuable inputs from learners who in different situations master the concepts better than them. As such, while serving as facilitators, these educators/teachers lay role of intermediaries who are involved in learning about themselves, about the changes in the field, along with the community and social expectation. Therefore, ESP learning facilitation does not only rest on the content knowledge of the teacher, as it also involves interaction between students and teachers which influences the attitudinal characteristic learning in students.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The present study addresses to school administrators from universities who offer English for specific purposes course, as it investigates on the aspects that can improve the teachers concern towards ESP. The findings can expand knowledge on program transformability, allowing institution administrators to focus more on issues underlying ESP teaching, while performing the necessary adjustments in order to ensure improvement in quality and academic success.

1.4. Contribution of the Study

According to the study conducted by Fontanin (2008) there are several issues that require to be addressed in English for specific purposes programs. Increasing volumes of resources, money, energy and time were invested on ESP courses, but their outcomes are still below the expectation. The goals of learners, level of proficiency and learners' needs should be considered, as it would be a big mistake to expose leaners to English for specific reasons, while it is clear that they lack knowledge when it comes to general English. Glasgow (2014) mentioned a lack of adequate awareness when it comes to analysing the need of curriculum, which negatively impacts both learners and students, considering that the quality of learning might be subjected to questioning. Thus, it is vital to conduct a need analysis in developing curriculum, which also focuses on language courses to eliminate any doubts on the quality.

Inferring to the study conducted by Aimoldina et al. (2012) ESP teachers in Saudi Arabia receive initial training in general English in most cases. However, they do not receive training in specialized English, where they use technical expression in materials to teach ESP terminology. It was also found that most of them do not have adequate teaching experience, which leads to issues when considering effective delivery. As an EFL teacher, it sometimes feels uncertain and insecure when ESP content is taught by general English teachers. Such challenges result from different factors, including lack of authentic input, colloquial and idiomatic expressions, targeting cultural contextual and background clues, along with professional development opportunities. In this light, when focusing on intensive training course in ESP, teachers should address both teaching methodologies and content knowledge such as to offer skills and knowledge in specialized areas. Considering the limited work on teacher's

perception on ESP issues related to pedagogical aspects, this study focuses on adding knowledge on the teacher's perception towards ESP at Saudi Arabian University.

Thus, the study is relevant to school administrators from universities offering English for specific purposes course, through investigating aspects related to the teachers concern in improving ESP. The findings can expand the knowledge on the program's transformability, allowing institution administrators to focus more on issues underlying ESP teaching, while making the necessary adjustments to ensure improvement in quality and academic success.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Questions

This study focuses on providing answers to the following questions:

1. What is the perception of teachers on pedagogy and challenges when teaching ESP courses?
2. How do the perceptions of teachers affect their pedagogy in teaching ESP courses at a Saudi Arabian university?
3. How can the pedagogical issues in ESP teaching settings be resolved at Saudi Arabian University?

2.2. Research Design

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design which firstly used the quantitative method, followed by the qualitative method, seeking to explain the findings of the quantitative method in more details. The approach can be described as a two-phase mixed methods design, where the researcher uses qualitative data to help explain, or build upon, initial quantitative results. Thus, quantitative data will be analysed using simple statistical description through Google Forms, while thematic analysis will be used for qualitative data analyses. A questionnaire survey will be used to collect the quantitative data from ESP teachers at the Saudi Arabian University, while in the case of the qualitative data, semi-structured interviews will be taken from ESP teachers to gain deeper understanding of the responses provided in the questionnaire survey.

2.3. Settings

ESP English language teachers at the English Language Institute (ELC) at Saudi Arabian University are involved in teaching many different ESP streams, dealing with Medical, Nursing, Technology And Tourism English courses.

2.4. Research Population and Sampling

The research focuses on ESP English language teachers at the English Language Institute (ELC) at Saudi Arabian University. The participants' selection process will employ random sampling, since it is found to be most appropriate in dealing with the issue of having willing participants to take part in such a research, which investigates their teaching issues. As such, it is expected to have 30 respondents of both genders to take part in the study.

In this study, non-probability sampling is mainly used due to the convenience of the researcher, as it is easier, cheaper and quicker compared to the probability sampling. In the Saudi Arabian University, there are 50 ESP teachers. The research used census sampling method, involving all the 50 ESP teachers in this study. In this light, it is necessary to mention that a sample of 50 participants can fairly represent the whole population due to time constraints and cost-effectiveness. All the participants will be given a survey questionnaire, while five randomly selected respondents will be interviewed. Moreover, working with a small representative population allows the researchers to extract much more information, because they have to concentrate on fewer individuals. Thus, for

this study, the target population was a small group (comprising of 50 individuals), therefore, choosing 30 participants out of them was not a complicated task.

2.5. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The questions were developed based on the relevant research studies, theories and emergent themes, being further tested for their validity. The issues identified were revised to ensure that the study questions can help the research to collect enough and relevant information for the purpose of solving the research problem.

The survey invitation letter and letter of seeking the consent to conduct the research at the university was submitted to the dissertation committee. This process was mainly employed such as to ensure compliance with the ethical issues. After the feedback, all the issues highlighted were revised accordingly.

A pilot study was conducted to test the workability of the research tools, including data analysis. Therefore, based on the pre-test, a few identified issues were revised. These included clarities on some questions, as the respondent could not clearly understand what they required. As such, they were paraphrased into a simpler language, making them clear and more comprehensive to participants.

After obtaining the consent of the participants, they were sent a set of questions via email and a link which they should use to upload the complete questionnaire. Those who did not provide the answers within one week were sent a reminder.

Interviews were conducted through the phone and were recorded. All the information collected was reduced into a meaningful form for analysis. Equally, the data was analysed, maintained anonymous and used solely for research purpose.

After the collection of data, it was recorded, reduced into a meaningful form and tabulated. In the case of the questionnaire, an Excel sheet with the data was presented into graphs in order to draw useful patterns which are essential for reaching a conclusion. Firstly, all the issues surrounding ESP teaching were analysed, along with the teachers' perspective. Afterwards, through using demographic characteristics of the respondents, the differences in perception were analysed. The approach is important in identifying whether teachers of both genders, individuals with different level of education and different experiences face the same issue. In this light, the study proceeded to investigate the difference in how teachers with varying demographic characteristics perceive the issues surrounding ESP programs teach. Considering that the survey questions are interested in the extent to which a respondent agrees or disagrees on the existence of a certain issue, communicates the level of threat respondents attach to these issues. For the interview, teachers' conversation was reduced and tabulated into a meaningful transcript. Respondent teachers were referred to as R accompanied with a given number for each teacher, i.e. R#, seeking to respect the anonymity of their identities. The transcription was presented into themes and sub themes to be used in the discussion of the thematic analysis of qualitative results. Through analysing the recommendations given by the respondents, the study provided solution to minimize or eliminate the threat presented by the issues related to instruction delivery in ESP, such as standard instructional material and professional development.

2.6. Ethical Consideration

The study strictly followed the ethical considerations of conducting research in education. Firstly, the institutional approval (Saudi Arabian University) was obtained before conducting the research, by sending a letter of request along with the research proposal. Upon approval, teachers focusing on ESP at Saudi Arabian University were contacted and provided with consent forms which detail the research purpose, the participants' roles, confidentiality and anonymity issues, and the researcher's contact information in order to enable them to make an informed choice about their participation. Lastly, collected data was safely stored on digital devices for confidentiality and easier retrieval.

3. FINDINGS

This study began by investigating the background information of the ESP teachers. The information included on teachers' gender category; age group; highest educational level; subject of specialization; years of teaching general English at institutes and years of teaching ESP at institutes.

Ensuring fair engagement of male and female respondents is a prerequisite measure in undertaking any social related study. In view of establishing the extent to which the current study met this requirement, respondents were requested to specify their gender category. The findings show fair and equal involvement of male and female respondents, as indicated by 50% in each case. Respondents of various age groups are perceived to hold diverse opinions relating single or plural subjects. In order to encompass various opinions from these groups concerning issues surrounding pedagogy for teaching ESP courses at Saudi Arabian University, respondents were requested to indicate their age category.

The findings of the collected data reveal that majority of the ESP teachers (50%) involved in this research were aged between 31 to 41 years, followed by those aged between 41 to 50 years with 35%, then those aged below 31 years, with 12.5% and the last category of ESP teachers aged above 50 years with 2.5%. The findings show fair involvement of ESP teachers from all the age classes, while also highlighting a high possibility that the results were rich and successful in capturing opinions from the different age groups.

Individual's educational qualification is linked with personal understanding and interpretation of certain subject. In light of determining teachers' abilities in responding to the research subject, respondents were required to indicate their highest educational qualifications attained. The findings of this study revealed that majority of the participants (62.5%) held MA level, followed by holders of BA level, as indicated by 17.5%, and finally the Doctorate candidate and PhD holders with 10% in each case. These results demonstrate that all the respondents were qualified enough, implying that all the respondents were in a position to comprehend and respond to the research questions with ease.

In order to source rich data that fully addresses the issues surrounding pedagogy for teaching ESP courses, it was vital to ensure that participants of various areas of specialization were involved in this study. As such, ESP teachers were required to indicate their major area of specialization. From the findings, 37.5% of the teachers involved in this study indicated that they were specialized in TESOL or Applied Linguistics, 7.5% of the respondents indicated that they were specialized in EFL/ESL, 5% were specialized ESP/EAP and finally 2.5% were specialized in either EFL/ESL; Curriculum and instruction education, English literature, Applied Linguistics; EFL/ESL, Translation or English language and literature. The above findings show that respondents were fairly drawn from areas of various specializations. Respondents were required to indicate their period in teaching general English. This was sought in view of establishing the teacher understanding on general English. Results obtained show that most of the teachers (30%) were teaching general English at various institutes for a period of 6 to 10 years, 25% of the participants indicated to teach general English for a period of more than 15 years, with a similar percentage of respondents teaching for less than 6 years, while 20% were teaching general English for a period of 11 to 15 years. This shows that majority of the respondents taught general English for a considerable period, thus, they were in a position to provide credible information relating to this study.

Experience in a specific field of practice is correlated with understanding the strengths and weakness related to that area. Therefore, understanding the teaching experience in teaching ESP at institutes was important in ascertaining their familiarity with the study subject. Thus, in this research, participants of the study were asked to specify the period they have been teaching ESP at institutes. The findings of the data reveal that majority of the ESP teachers (52.5%) had taught in various institutions for a period not exceeding 6 years, 30% of the ESP teachers indicated 6 to 10 years, 12.5% indicated 11 to 15 years, while 5% of the ESP teachers indicated more than 15 years

of teaching ESP. This implies that most of the ESP teachers had taught in various institutes for a considerable time and were in a position to provide relevant opinions based on their experience.

3.1. Issues Surrounding Pedagogy for Teaching ESP Courses at a Saudi Arabian University

This section presents the statistical analysis on content knowledge, training methods, availability of ESP materials at a Saudi Arabian University and other challenges surrounding pedagogy in teaching ESP courses. Seeking to establish the various issues surrounding pedagogy for teaching ESP courses at a Saudi Arabian University, the study required the respondents to provide their ratings, through usin a Likert scale of 1 to 4, where 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Agree and 4 = Strongly Agree.

3.1.1. Content Knowledge

From the study findings, majority of the ESP teachers teaching various courses at a Saudi Arabian University agreed on possessing sufficient knowledge of ESP required to teach ESP courses, while they were aware of different teaching methods (as shown by a mean =3.00, in each case). Equally, most of the teachers also agreed that teaching ESP was their primary teaching area (mean =2.65, std dev =0.86). The findings support Brunton (2009) opinion, according to which ESP teachers must possess adequate relevant knowledge and skills. The findings on content knowledge are illustrated in Table below.

Table-1. Findings on content knowledge

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teaching ESP is my primary teaching area.	40	1.00	4.00	2.65	0.86
Teaching ESP is challenging for me.	40	1.00	4.00	2.55	0.71
My knowledge of ESP is good to teach ESP courses.	40	1.00	4.00	3.00	0.72
As an ESP, I have been trained to teach ESP after joining my current institution.	40	1.00	4.00	1.85	0.92
I have taken training courses in ESP before joining my current institution."	40	1.00	3.00	1.85	0.80
As an ESP teacher, I am aware of different teaching methods.	40	1.00	4.00	3.00	0.78

Quantitative statistics further revealed that teaching ESP was challenging to majority of the teachers (mean =2.55, STD dev =0.71). The findings are also in line with interviewee's reports, which indicate that all the ESP teachers found teaching of ESP courses generally challenging, especially at the beginning of their teaching. Some participants expressed that they self-learnt how to overcome some of the challenges especially the content and knowledge related ones.

The findings equally reveal that most of teachers never took training courses in ESP before joining or that they were never trained to teach ESP since they joined their current institution (mean =1.85, in each case). These findings contravene with who urges for continuous skill development of teachers, emphasizing the importance in maintaining updated teaching methods in class. Furthermore, interviewees' R1 (male), R6 and R10 (females) clarified that they attended a few presentations on ESP when attended some ESP related conferences (lines 31; 36;; 40) *"I have made several attendance ESP related presentations," "I have presented in some ESP related conferences," "I have attended and presented in ESP conferences."*

The study also noted that all the teachers implemented various activities during the learning process. For instance, interviewee R4 stressed out that *"all participants find the textbook along with supportive workbook rich in various exercises that help students practice grammar and vocabulary, along with other language skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing."* However, all the interviewees, apart from R2 and R10, considered that ESP writing is not

given the enough time due to the pacing of the course. Students of lower level groups struggle the most with speaking and writing exercises, thus, they need more time to cover the basics in their textbooks. In addition, students of higher level groups can be given extra and more advanced exercises.

3.1.2. Teaching Methods

In light of the research findings, majority of the ESP teachers agreed that students' answers sometimes can be different from the teacher's choice (mean = 3.33, std dev = 0.62). ESP teachers agreed that using challenging activities aid in developing students' critical thinking (mean = 3.33, std dev = 0.57). The respondents agreed that they favoured communicative teaching methods over traditional teaching methods (mean = 3.20, std dev = 0.61). The findings are in line with argument, according to which communicative teaching methods present a good learning situation because the language being spoken is memorized, as to when the same language is presented randomly. The findings are presented in Table 2 below.

Respondents also agreed that teaching communication skills is more important than teaching grammar (mean = 3.15, std dev = 3.74), while using peer feedback helps students identify their strengths. Moreover, majority of ESP teachers only worked as a facilitator of learning (mean = 3.05 in each case). These findings support the findings of who claimed that most of the EFL teachers do not have the fundamental requirement for teaching ESP courses, which determined them to remain in their comfort zone, restricting them from teaching general English.

Furthermore, the study results revealed that it is effective to let students solve problems by themselves (mean = 3.00, std dev = 0.78). ESP teachers also agreed that group work is an effective teaching strategy for reducing the achievement gap between students of low and high communication abilities (mean = 2.93, std dev = 0.80). The respondents believed that communicative teaching methods help students memorize technical terms (mean = 2.90, std dev = 0.74). When answering the question about the testing system at their current institution, the respondents believed that it helps teachers understand ESP learner's academic needs (mean = 2.50, std dev = 0.88). These findings are in line with the findings by who raised the need of investigating aspects related to academic and administrative improvement, especially in teaching of ESP courses.

On teaching approaches used by ESP teachers, interviewees mentioned that they employed the communicative teaching method, by R5 and R9, the direct method, by R3 and R7, the grammar translation method, by R4, task-based language learning, by R2, and the structural approach, by R3, among others.

Table-2. Applied teaching methods

Descriptive Statistics					
Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
As an ESP teacher, I work as a facilitator of learning.	40	2.00	4.00	3.05	0.45
I favour communicative teaching methods over traditional teaching methods.	40	2.00	4.00	3.20	0.61
Communicative teaching methods help students memorize technical terms.	40	1.00	4.00	2.90	0.74
Teaching communication skills is more important than teaching grammar.	40	1.00	4.00	3.15	0.74
Group work is an effective teaching strategy for reducing the achievement gap between students of low and high communication abilities.	40	1.00	4.00	2.93	0.80
I accept students' answers that can be different from mine.	40	1.00	4.00	3.33	0.62
Using challenging activities help develop students' critical thinking.	40	2.00	4.00	3.33	0.57
Using peer feedback helps students identify their strengths.	40	2.00	4.00	3.05	0.55
It is effective to let students solve problems themselves.	40	1.00	4.00	3.00	0.78
Testing system at my institute helps me understand my ESP learner's academic needs.	40	1.00	4.00	2.50	0.88

3.1.3. ESP Materials Used in Saudi Arabian University

Data presented in Table 3 reveals that majority of ESP teachers were using technical materials (e.g., English in administration, nursing, science) that helped to develop students' ability to communicate in specialized areas (mean = 3.13, std dev = 0.52). Moreover, ESP materials used at the university focus on grammar rules and sentence patterns (mean = 2.80, std dev = 0.64), while ESP materials at the institute are constantly updated with current issues and information (mean = 2.45, std dev = 0.78). The study also noted that finding the most appropriate learning material was a role that was solely executed by ESP teachers at the university. Such learning materials helped prepare learners to function well outside their school, such as in their future workplaces. These findings are supported by who asserted that teaching resources, including specialized materials, might not be available, thus, raising the need for ESP teachers to adapt teaching materials in order to suite the learners' need and instructional context. As such, interviewees R1, R2 R3, R4, R5, R7 and R9 highlighted certain challenges that they face in teaching material provided by the institute, such as the fact that the ESP courses at the institute do not match the needs of learners for improving communicative competence in their specialized areas, while the ESP materials at the institute are not updated with current educational materials/tools and information. The data in illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table-3. ESP material used at the institute

Descriptive Statistics					
Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
ESP materials at my institute focus on grammar rules and sentence patterns.	40	1.00	4.00	2.80	0.79
ESP materials at my institute are updated with current issues and information.	40	1.00	4.00	2.45	0.78
Using technical materials (e.g., English in administration, nursing, science) helps develop students' ability to communicate in specialized areas.	40	2.00	4.00	3.13	0.52
Valid N (listwise)	40				

3.1.4. Challenges

Teachers involved in this study agreed that large classes make application of communicative teaching methods difficult (mean = 3.23, std deviation = 0.66), while they also agreed that the quality of knowledge possessed by ESP

teachers at their current institutions needs to be improved in order to effectively teach ESP courses(mean = 3.15, std deviation = 0.89). The management of the university did not provide ESP teachers enough opportunities for professional development courses in ESP (mean = 3.13, std deviation =0.88). In addition, students' low English proficiency also hinders the application of communicative teaching methods (mean = 2.95, std dev = 0.64). The findings also show that ESP courses at the university match the needs of learners for improving communicative competence in specialized areas (mean = 2.65, std deviation = 0.74). The findings are in line with the findings of Richards and Schmidt (2010) according to which ESP English teachers should work closely with the institution in order to remove any possible ambiguities. Interviewees indicated that before securing the current employment, they never received training for teaching ESP; however, after securing the current employment, they attended some occasional orientations provided by the current employer. Table 4 presents the above mentioned information.

Table-4. Challenges teachers face

Descriptive Statistics

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students' low English proficiency makes application of communicative teaching methods difficult.	40	1.00	4.00	2.95	0.64
My knowledge of ESP needs to be improved to teach ESP courses.	40	1.00	4.00	3.15	0.89
I am not given enough opportunities for professional development courses in ESP.	40	1.00	4.00	3.13	0.88
Large classes make application of communicative teaching methods difficult.	40	1.00	4.00	3.23	0.66
ESP courses at my institute match the needs of learners for improving communicative competence in specialized areas.	40	1.00	4.00	2.65	0.74
Valid N (listwise)	40				

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Perception of Teachers on Pedagogy and Challenges while Teaching ESP Courses

In line with the first objective, this study investigated the general perceptions of teachers on pedagogy and the challenges when teaching ESP courses at a Saudi Arabian University. Evidence obtained from the descriptive statistics confirms various challenges encountered in the process of teaching ESP. As noted from data reports, ESP teachers had a challenging time in dealing with learners who happen to require exclusive levels of attention as per the university context. This kind of diversity rages from students' motivation level towards learning English at elementary and high school levels. Other factors mentioned by the respondents include previous scores in English subject, students' priorities and general experience in school. This lack of uniformity calls for further re-tailoring of pedagogy in order to maintain the students not only motivated, but also engaged in the classroom. These findings are supported by, who asserted that when learners find certain subjects non-enjoyable during the learning process, their overall motivation is decreased negatively, affecting the subject learning outcomes and results in the long run. The findings are also in line with opinion, according to which teachers should make great efforts to ensure that their teaching approach facilitates, engages and caters the distinctiveness of their students.

Participant also mentioned certain general challenges, with R1 focusing on teacher's ESP background, where most of these challenges involved lack of ESP knowledge on the ESP subject. Managerial challenges were also stressed out by interviewees R3, R4 and R5 who indicated that "*the current employer does not provide proper training for new in-service teachers*" (lines 133-135), which ultimately led to teacher's lack of ESP professional development.

Interviewees also indicated that learners who are admitted in Saudi Arabian universities happen to hail from dissimilar geographical areas. As students either come from remote areas or urban areas, this diversity in native

environments results in non-uniform English learning experience. This factor is reaffirmed by the interviewees who indicate that students from remote places expressed negative attitude towards the English subject in general.

Interviewees R2, R4, R6, R9 and R10 faced some challenges inside the classroom, including students' low English proficiency, stating that "*large classes with more than 25 students which make the application of communicative teaching methods difficult*" (lines 152, 154, 156, 159 and 160). Apart from the above-mentioned challenges, ESP teachers considered materials to be a challenge in teaching as well. They believe (R2, R3, R4, R6, R8, R9 and R10) that the materials used in the classroom do not support their pedagogical needs, while they are also are outdated "*ESP materials at my institute are not updated with current educational materials/tools and information*" (lines 162, 163, 164, 166, 168, 169, and 170). This challenge makes the learning and teaching process challenging not only for the teachers but also has become a boring experience for the learners.

Furthermore, the current study noted that lack of uniformity in the competence level related to English language further presented considerable challenge in ESP classrooms. As such, emphasizing on teaching grammar skills as opposed to preparing students for communicative skills, as the objective of teaching ESP courses, was mentioned as an issue for most of the participants. This finding contradicts the argument by, who stated that ESP courses majorly centre on preparing university learners only for special communicative environments.

4.2. Effect of Teacher Pedagogy on Teaching of ESP Courses

Drawing from collected data, the findings demonstrate that a majority of ESP teachers possessed adequate knowledge that was related to ESP curriculum, student characteristics, and various factors that influenced the teaching and learning process at the university under investigation. The data revealed that teaching ESP was a primary teaching field of many of the participants. Although having sufficient knowledge of ESP required to teach ESP courses, the majority of the respondents admitted that teaching ESP was challenging for them, which can a result of the fact that most of the teachers never received training to teach ESP since they joined their current institution. For them having updated knowledge through in-house ESP courses is a must. Without obtaining the latest teaching methods and techniques in their areas of teaching, it would not be possible for them to prepare their learners for the needs of their future workplaces.

Essential to continuous professional growth and development is self-knowledge, along with one's capability to reflect on effectiveness of teaching tactics and the learning outcomes. Self-evaluation and reflection are important elements of teaching ESP courses. However, in the case of the selected university, very few teachers reported to conduct such evaluations. Suggestions from the findings of the interview data advocated that every teacher should conduct self-evaluations through frequent observations in order to record their strengths and weaknesses correlated with the set targets. The statement is further supported by Nidar and Bestari (2012) who asserts the importance of continually developing strong competencies required in teaching practice for the teachers teaching general or specific purposes English, in order for them to adapt to the dynamic challenges that may occur along their careers.

The findings of the questionnaire also reveal that the students' answers can be different from the teacher's choice, while teachers accept all kinds of answer to encourage learners' confidence and keep them motivated to learn the language. Many of the teachers believe that using challenging activities help in developing students' critical thinking. This view also suggests that in order to promote critical thinking among their learners, teachers need to be more focused on the task-based approach while teaching ESP courses. The findings from interviewees show that the ESP teachers favoured communicative teaching methods over traditional teaching methods. These findings concur with argument, claiming that communicative teaching methods presents a good learning situation as the language being spoken is memorized, compared to the case where the same language is presented randomly. But the challenge here is the material teachers use. Most of the teachers mentioned that the material they teach encourages

grammar skills, rather than communicative skills. In this light, an updated material should be implemented in order to encourage communicative skills and foster communicative competence in our learners.

The study results further revealed that it is effective to allow students solve problems by themselves. ESP teachers also agreed that group work is an effective teaching strategy for reducing the achievement gap between students of low and high communication abilities. They also considered that communicative teaching methods help students memorize technical terms. Many of the interviewees believe that the testing system at their current institution helped them understand their ESP learner's academic needs. It is clear from the collected data that teachers are aware and willing to apply communicative teaching methods if they are provided with enough time, materials and the curriculum following communicative teaching methods.

In order to improve pedagogical skills of the ESP teachers at the university under study, many respondents suggested a call for an invitation to a constructive criticism from treasured fellow colleagues working at the same institution. The criticism should characterize teaching style, classroom organization, utilization of teaching resources, mannerism and classroom management. Furthermore, special consideration should be paid to connect ESP teachers and learners, being expected from the ESP teachers to develop close, relaxed and positive relationships with students.

4.3. Measures to Solve Pedagogical Issues Encountered while Teaching ESP Courses

Based on the findings, all the involved respondents provided various suggestions and recommendations towards solving various issues that impede teaching of ESP courses at their university. At the same time, it is important to tailor the current pedagogical teaching strategies in view of accommodating students with diverse personal and classrooms needs. This is based on the revelation that students enrolling at the university come from different environments and backgrounds, therefore, having different perceptions about the English language and learning English. This is the reason that they exhibit different level of motivation towards the subject and also have different level of competence in English language.

Despite that the perception of ESP teachers towards learner's proficiency in English was established to influence their utilization of learner-centred teaching approach, most of them were found to have low motivation, which consequently resulted into lower utilization of the approach. In order to make ESP teaching more effective, a majority of the interviewees called for appropriate support from the university, such as providing opportunities in the forms of development courses that help in professional development, especially for ESP teachers.

This study suggests that the institution should develop a suitable ESP pedagogy and incorporate it in the current university ESP curriculum. Reports from the interviewees called for prioritization in development of universal communicative English. In order to overcome communication challenge, considerable number of ESP teachers described this tool as a major factor that can ensure successful learning of ESP courses in the institution. Notably, other counteractive responses that address the communication challenge include the subjection of students to appropriate programs that can sharpen students reading and listening skills, while providing learners with an appropriate model of English that is required in building competency and fluency in English. At the same time, responses obtained demonstrated that being in a position to orally communicate in English is essential for every learner, especially in achieving his or her school objectives. A considerable number of respondents hold the strong believe that in order to attain learner's objectives in school, students should first start with learning the basics of language, especially in speaking, and not merely by developing some grammatical understanding and knowledge.

The views on measuring the curb issues surrounding pedagogy when teaching ESP courses at a Saudi Arabian university also suggested for development of collaborative teaching strategy. This practice should involve at least two teachers: one being a language instructor and the other being the content teacher. Interviewees indicated that both should work together simultaneously during class lessons. This collaborative teaching method can help solve

challenges where teachers lack understanding on content and also in situations where teachers lack strong linguistic foundation.

Teachers should also monitor their speeches in order to make sure that class presentation is comprehensible and follows a logical sequence. In order to teach well, one is required to exercise expertise in the entire process such as to impart the necessary sense to learners. Thus, every teacher must possess required teaching skills. These findings are supported by who claim that teaching should be a continuous procedure that involves proficiency development and self-discovery thorough understanding of the training and learning procedures.

4.4. Limitations of the Study

Despite its findings, the study also encountered certain limitations. As such, the study is limited to only one university that would not reflect the entire population of Saudi ESP teachers' perceptions. Due to gender segregation in the Saudi Arabian education system, the researcher is not be able to conduct face to face interview with her male colleagues, leading to conducting the interviews via phone calls, which can affect the responses of the participants. In this light, the study can be replicated in other universities in the Saudi Arabian and Middle Eastern context with similar conditions, culture and background, resulting in different findings.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that teachers of ESP at a Saudi Arabian university faced various challenges that required immediate redress. ESP teachers appeared to be inadequately prepared for the job because of the lack of ESP teaching skills and knowledge, which ultimately resulted in meagre teaching capabilities. Thus, having professional and qualified ESP teachers at the university is essential in ensuring the quality and outcomes of learning. It is important to note that ESP teachers form the main source of English language input to learners and they directly affect the learning process.

The employer can play a key decisive role in enhacing the ESP program at the university under study. As noted, the management of the institute under study did not offer ESP teachers enough opportunities for professional development courses in ESP. Most of the teachers indicated that they had never attended any skill development course since they joined the current institution. Therefore, it is recommended to initiate teacher development programmes that will prepare ESP teachers in developing knowledge and right command of language instructions, while enabling them to organize, give clear explanations, clarifications, arouse and maintain students' interest and motivation, along with being fair to students without showing favouritism. Using technical materials (e.g., English in administration, nursing, science) helps develop students' ability to communicate in specialized areas; however, lack of such materials presented a major challenge for ESP teachers. Thus, ESP teachers should be provided with necessary teaching materials, which will enable them to execute their tasks effectively.

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