

Exploring English For Specific (ESP) Instruction Realities: Teacher Perspectives On Challenges And Strategies*

“... neither field instructors nor English instructors can achieve efficiency in these classes...”

Nurgül Doğan *, Demet Yaylı**

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Abstract: The present study focused on the challenges, strategies and suggestions of a group of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instructors employed at a School of Foreign Languages (SFL) in Türkiye. It employed a qualitative case approach, involving semi-structured interviews with nine ESP instructors. The researchers analyzed the data through both directed and conventional content analysis coding methods. The findings revealed that the primary challenge was the limited or diverse language proficiency of the learners, which could lead to difficulties in selecting and adapting resources and burdening the instructors with hefty workloads. Students’ low motivation was another significant challenge, and the absence of pre-service and in-service training and of collaboration with field instructors further exacerbated the situation for ESP instructors. The participating instructors also noted discrepancies in teaching methodologies and assessment procedures both within their own institution and among various universities. To address these issues, they used resources such as native language, artificial intelligence, general English materials, images, videos as translanguaging strategies to support comprehension and motivation. They also believed that certain courses and organizations should be provided at both pre- and in-service levels devoted specifically to ESP teaching, and certain credentials requiring clarification (i.e., establishing standardizations for the ESP groups of learners) should be designed by the Higher Education Council (HEC). Thus, the participating instructors’ suggestions for the design and delivery of more efficient ESP classes hold implications for ESP instructors, higher education institutions, instructor educators, coursebook providers, HEC and the researchers in the field.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), undergraduate courses for ESP, in-service training, School of Foreign Languages (SFL)

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* The corresponding author can be contacted for further details regarding this study.

*  Corresponding Author’s: Öğr. Gör., Uşak University, School of Foreign Languages, Türkiye, E-mail: nurgul.dogan@usak.edu.tr.

**  Prof. Dr., Pamukkale University, Faculty of Education, Türkiye, E-mail: demety@pau.edu.tr.

Introduction

The discipline of ESP is concerned with the linguistic requirements and behaviors of specific professional or occupational groups. It derives its strength from theoretical frameworks and educational studies that clarify the impact of social circumstances on language utilization and the means by which learners could achieve proficiency. It challenges the division between theory and practice and exposes academic and professional genres to students (Hyland, 2019). The domain of ESP is indebted, at least to some extent, to the widespread and enduring use of English as a common language in field-specific interactions (Nickerson, 2013). ESP training is included into curricula across specialized domains, including vocational fields like tourism and hospitality, professional sectors such as international law and banking, and academic pursuits like thesis and dissertation writing, in diverse contexts (Çelik et al., 2018).

Currently, Hyland (2019) described some influences on ESP and some impacts it had on language teaching. The influences are genre analysis, ethnography, critical perspectives, intercultural rhetoric and social constructivist theory. The impacts include the examination of discourse rather than language, the teacher as a researcher, collaborative pedagogies, the significance of discourse variants, and language alongside institutional applications. He highlighted that needs analysis was at the heart of ESP teaching with different genres because any ESP scope may have different genres, independent of text type. He further concluded that ESP is interdisciplinary, and that institutional practices are quite crucial. Other contemporary themes addressed in ESP education include power issues in classrooms (Hyland, 2019) and the promotion of social justice (Starfield, 2013). In line with these themes, the concept of translanguaging is also present in ESP instruction. In recent years, scholars have increasingly emphasized the pedagogical value of translanguaging, particularly in multilingual classrooms where learners face proficiency gaps or limited exposure to English outside formal education (García & Wei, 2014; Makalela, 2017; Wei, 2018). Translanguaging refers to the strategic and dynamic use of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire, across languages and modalities, for meaning-making, communication, and learning (García & Wei, 2014). Although not specific to ESP, such approaches inevitably offer pedagogical implications for ESP instruction, where students are required to access complex disciplinary content in a non-native language. The use of semiotic resources such as visual aids, gestures, and first-language scaffolding can support comprehension and engagement in these contexts (Canagarajah, 2019; Holliday, 2019). Admittedly, these multilingual and multimodal perspectives could open new possibilities for more inclusive and learner-responsive ESP pedagogy.

As for ESP instruction in Türkiye, English-medium instruction (EMI) is limited to a select few universities, as the predominant medium is Turkish. Students study English in 1-year preparatory programs, including English language classes in EMI universities. Non-EMI universities, which constitute the majority, do not offer compulsory language courses before the first grade, leading to heterogeneous proficiency levels among students when

they take ESP courses at the 2nd and 3rd grades because students having basic level English cannot have a chance to study a preparatory program to upgrade their English level to intermediate or upper levels. This may present challenges for both students and instructors in Türkiye. Although certain structural characteristics of ESP instruction—such as whether students have attended a preparatory English program or the elective/compulsory status of ESP courses—may vary in the Turkish context. Studies conducted in diverse educational systems (e.g., Chen, 2011; Suzani et al., 2011; Petraki & Khat, 2022) reveal that different institutional setups can still lead to similar pedagogical challenges. This suggests that while the configurations differ, the resulting difficulties in ESP implementation often converge across various contexts.

Current literature showcases challenges in ESP teaching based upon interconnected themes: overcrowded classes, students' limited engagements and various language proficiencies, materials design and its relevance, instructors' beliefs on ESP teaching and pedagogical challenges, heavy workloads and ESP's perceived importance and recognition worldwide. These themes appear frequently in a wide variety of studies and serve as a basis for identifying persistent challenges in instruction that transcend national borders.

Overcrowded classrooms are a common challenge in ESP teaching, hindering student concentration and complicating classroom management (Chen, 2011; Çelik et al., 2018; Hoa & Mai, 2016; Suzani et al., 2011). Diverse language proficiencies and student engagement also impact instruction effectiveness (Çelik et al., 2018; Hoa & Mai, 2016; Mede et al., 2018). In Turkish and Latvian contexts, Çelik et al. (2018) found that inadequate language proficiencies limit students' ability to benefit from ESP courses, a concern echoed by Hoa and Mai (2016). These studies consistently emphasize that instructors often struggle to manage large, mixed-ability groups, which in turn affects the pacing, targeting, and effectiveness of ESP instruction.

Furthermore, students expressed dissatisfaction with traditional course materials, preferring more real-life activities (Mede et al., 2018; Sandal, 2019; Suzani et al., 2011). To compensate for this, Kazar and Mede (2015) suggested focusing on practical language skills, while also studies in Türkiye demonstrated the effectiveness of alternative methodologies, such as drama (Saygılı, 2014), situational dialogues (Sezgin, 2019), and web tools (Aslandemir, 2020; Zırhlı, 2021) in ESP instruction. Together, these findings underline the need for student-centered and contextually relevant materials that go beyond textbook-bound instruction and have the potential of reflecting students' real-world and professional needs.

On the other hand, material design that includes authentic, relevant content remains a priority, though limited resources and heavy workloads often mean instructors develop materials independently, posing additional challenges (Baştürkmen, 2019; Petraki & Khat, 2022). This reinforces the idea that material development in ESP is not only a

pedagogical task but also an institutional challenge, particularly in under-resourced settings where instructors shoulder most of the responsibility.

More directly related to the gist of the current study, studies on instructors' beliefs revealed two important issues in ESP teaching: instructors' need for training and pedagogical challenges involved. Johnson (2006) previously argued that language instructor educators should integrate tools of investigation into L2 instructor education programs to develop a teaching force of 'transformative intellectuals' who can place themselves as ESP professionals (p. 235). However, insufficient ESP-specific training at both the undergraduate and in-service levels, which includes both pedagogical and subject-related content knowledge for instructors, emerged as a persistent challenge (Hoa & Mai, 2016; Petraki & Khat, 2022; Sincer, 2017; Tao & Gao, 2018) and the need for training seems to be global (Bojovic, 2006; Bracaj, 2014; Sincer, 2017) although some studies (Çelik, et al., 2018; Petraki & Khat, 2022) have indicated that instructors could partially compensate for the aforementioned deficiencies through experience. Most recently, in a case study, the participating instructors' views captured in Kaya's study (2024) seemed to have confirmed some challenges of ESP instructors reflected in the literature. These were by lacking content knowledge and terminology expertise in specific ESP domains, insufficient professional guidance and training support for teaching ESP, feelings of incompetence and insufficiency in handling ESP course content. In another recent study, also supporting the literature, Iswati and Triastuti (2021) revealed instructors' views on their challenges, such as lacking knowledge on students' fields of study, a lack of ESP training, a lack of proper needs analysis, large classes, and various language proficiencies of students.

According to Swales (2000), ESP has yet to attain the status of a complete profession or a distinct sub-discipline in language sciences. Also, Chen (2011) noted the lack of a theoretical framework guiding ESP instruction as a key challenge. Moreover, despite its importance, ESP's recognition as an academic discipline remains unclear for both learners and instructors (Sincer, 2017; Suzani et al., 2011; Tao & Gao, 2018). Participants highlighted uncertainties about course goals, with learners unsure of objectives and instructors debating whether to focus on content or language. While the content-language relationship is widely acknowledged in LSP (Davies, 2001), research in this area is limited, often relying on bilingual studies (Byrnes, 2008; Llosa, 2017). Notably, the studies in the ESP field are limited; (Kırkgöz & Dikilitaş, 2018) especially on 'instructors and teaching' (Baştürkmen, 2019, p.2). Previous research on ESP revealed similar challenges in different contexts about ESP teaching. Although numerous studies have identified pedagogical and structural challenges in ESP instruction across various contexts, how instructors navigate these realities, particularly in non-EMI institutions where support structures are limited, remains underexplored. Moreover, the practical insights and coping strategies that instructors employ have received comparatively little attention in literature, despite their potential to inform both pedagogical practices and institutional policies. This study addresses this gap by examining not only the challenges

faced by ESP instructors in Türkiye but also the strategies and suggestions they offer for more effective course design and delivery based on the following research questions:

- What are the challenges that ESP instructors have?
- What strategies do ESP instructors apply to deal with the challenges they have?
- What are ESP instructors' suggestions for the design and delivery of more efficient ESP classes?

Methodology

Research Design

The current study employed a qualitative case approach which is defined as an approach 'in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time' (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). This methodology was used because it allowed offering an in-depth analysis of the case with its boundaries (Creswell, 2013) in its unique context.

Participants

The present study utilized criterion sampling as this sampling technique allows researchers to focus on study participants who possess certain qualities or experiences that are relevant to the research objectives (Dörnyei, 2007). The participating ESP instructors for the current study were 1 male and 8 female (EFL) instructors who had been employed at the same institution, a School of Foreign Languages (SFL) for a minimum of 7 years. All the instructors were graduates of the English language teaching program and had either taught ESP classes in the past three years or were presently teaching them. They participated on a voluntary basis. It is important to note that we assumed to achieve data saturation during the interviews because after the ninth interview, no new themes or insights surfaced, supporting the justification for the sample size. Accordingly, the sample was deemed adequate for the study's exploratory and qualitative depth (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Furthermore, the results are meant to offer a thorough understanding of a particular institutional setting and inform comparable ESP environments, not to be generalizable to all contexts, as is the case with many qualitative case studies. Table 1 shows the participating instructors' life histories.

Table 1
Instructors' Life Histories

	Age	Gender	Years of Experience	Years of Experience on ESP teaching	Departments ESP taught	Current Teaching Area
Instructor 1	39	Female	17	13	Civil Aviation and Cabin Services, Finance, Food Engineering, Medicine, Sport Science	ESP- Civil Aviation and ESP-Cabin Services, Finance and Sport Science
Instructor 2	35	Female	11	2	Nursing, Logistics Management, Accounting	General English
Instructor 3	48	Female	10	7	Civil Aviation and Cabin Services, Finance, Logistics Management, International Trade and Finance	ESP- Civil Aviation and Cabin Services, Finance, Logistics Management, International Trade

Table 1 (continued)

	Age	Gender	Years of Experience	Years of Experience on ESP teaching	Departments ESP taught	Current Teaching Area
Instructor 4	48	Male	11	9	Logistics Management, International Trade, Foreign Trade, Banking and Accounting, Office Management, Occupational Health and Safety, Tourism and Travelling Services, Tourism and Accommodation Services	ESP-Logistics, Foreign Trade, Office Management and Tourism
Instructor 5	36	Female	10	5	Tourism Management and Guidance, Logistics Management, Occupational Health and Safety	General English
Instructor 6	33	Female	12	5	Logistics Management, Medicine	General English

Instructor 7	44	Female	22	5	Medicine, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, International Trade and Finance, Office Management	General English
Instructor 8	36	Female	12	3	Food Engineering, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Finance, Public Administration, Social Services	ESP- Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Social Services
Instructor 9	33	Female	12	4	Nursing Department	General English

Data Collection Tools

We collected the verbal data through semi-structured interviews, which are suitable for exploring a well-understood phenomenon while allowing open-ended responses (Dörnyei, 2007). We prepared the initial open-ended questions and consulted 3 ELT experts about the content validity of the questions. After receiving their feedback, we made the necessary arrangements and finalized the interview protocol. The final version included demographic questions and main interview questions.

Researcher Role

The present study holds an emic perspective by the researcher (i.e., the first author) who has been working at the same institution for 10 years, giving ESP courses at least for 7 years along with the participating ESP instructors who have been working for 7 years on average at the same institution. Therefore, her observations and reflection on her ESP teaching past helped to obtain healthier data analysis, interpretation and meaning making over the captured data. In this way, a more immersive and sensitive approach was aimed for during both data collection and analysis, leading to a deeper understanding of the case. Both researchers took an active role in the development of semi-structured interview questions. The first researcher undertook the data coding as a whole, and the second researcher coded 20% of the data and compared the results with the first researcher to ensure reliability.

Data Collection Process

We collected the data within 10-minute interview sessions conducted in English with each participant at pre-scheduled times. We recorded the oral interviews for later verbatim transcription.

Data Analysis

We transcribed and analyzed the verbal data using both directed and conventional content analysis methods (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In the directed approach, we derived initial analytic codes from theoretical considerations and prior research, coding the data for the first research question according to literature-based themes as well as emerging themes. For the second research question and third research question, we used a conventional approach, with coding categories informed directly by the texts.

Ethical Issues and Trustworthiness

We adhered to a set of ethical criteria during the entirety of the investigation. Initially, prior to the gathering of research data, we secured an ethical approval. Prior to the interviews, we elucidated the study's goal and substance to the participants, who provided both verbal and written consent separately for their participation and voluntary voice recording. We informed the participants about 'confidentiality' and their right of 'withdrawal' from the research (Cresswell, 2013, pg. 89). To ensure validity, we consulted 3 ELT specialists regarding the validity of interview questions. We tested the questions in a piloting session. To assess reliability, the second researcher coded the same 20% of the data, and we observed a high inter-coder agreement.

Findings

We discussed findings in parallel to research questions. They revealed that participating ESP instructors have very similar challenges as those discussed in the literature, they appear to have some coping strategies and also suggestions for ESP instructors, instructor educators, Schools of Foreign Languages (SFL), ELT programs and the Higher Education Council (HEC) as well.

What are the challenges that ESP instructors have?

The findings revealed that many challenges faced by ESP instructors, such as diverse and limited student language proficiency, lack of ESP-specific training for teachers, overcrowded classes, low student engagement, and heavy workloads, are not context-specific but common across various settings (Çelik et al., 2018; Hoa & Mai, 2016; Petraki & Kha, 2022). Key challenges included limited and diverse language profiles ($n=9$), lack of ESP training ($n=9$), low student engagement ($n=6$), and overcrowded classes ($n=6$), with a quote illustrating students' limited language proficiency (see Table 2):

Instructor 2: "The students usually have basic or intermediate English skills, but ESP courses are designed for the students who have at least B2+ level students. This is the basic problem of these courses."

Table 2
Challenges Encountered by ESP Instructors

Categories	Themes
Pedagogical challenges and training	Lack of pre-service training on ESP teaching Lack of undergraduate courses for ESP teacher candidates Lack of content knowledge by instructors Inconsistency among instructors' practices Problems with testing and evaluation Overcrowded classes Heavy loads Lack of instructor motivation

Table 2 (continued)

Categories	Themes
Resource and material issues	Limited course hours Materials problems
Student engagement and proficiency	Lack of student motivation Limited language profiles among students Diverse language profiles Lack of content knowledge by students Lack of appreciation by students
Poor planning	Lack of having units for ESP in SFLs Lack of cooperation with field instructors

The issue of limited language proficiency appeared to lead to an additional challenge: the selection and adaptation of suitable course books and other instructional materials. This need for adaptation and producing suitable and efficient materials became one of the reasons for instructors' heavy workloads, as stated below:

Instructor 7: "The problems with the materials are that they generally do not match the student profile and student level. They are too high above the student level. Students' language proficiency is limited for these classes. The level of Cambridge, Oxford books is too high. The books are mostly concentrated on the content rather than the language. Other materials, too, are so difficult. There are absolutely no materials at the basic and intermediate levels, they start directly from B2, or even higher. So, I definitely simplify materials. This is a big burden for me: finding and simplifying the materials every time. I feel bad about it."

The participating ESP instructors further detailed the issues about course books. They reported challenges in selecting appropriate texts due to insufficient training and unfamiliarity with specific content areas, leading to discomfort with books that prioritize content over language. As one instructor remarked:

Instructor 9: "Coursebooks are expensive and hard to find for professional areas. I lack familiarity with detailed technical vocabulary. When teaching Job Health and Security (department), for instance, I struggled with tool names, which even native speakers might not know. I prefer using previous materials, as current ones are dull and lack context."

Students often come unprepared, so I have to adapt and simplify the materials, which is exhausting."

Instructor 8: "I had problems while choosing materials because I am not an expert in the area. For example, I do not know the English equivalent for 'bobin', which is a term for Electronical Engineering. I even do not know the Turkish meaning."

Instructor 4: "I have to choose between using general English materials or ESP coursebooks. One is for language; the other is for the content. There is not a balance. I have to sacrifice either one."

Another common challenge reported was the need for ESP training for instructors both in pre- and in-service levels ($n=9$), although some participants ($n=2$) indicated that they could mitigate the absence of training through practical experience as indicated in the following:

Instructor 5: "We learnt to teach four skills for different proficiency levels, but I only discovered ESP classes and their content when I started working here. It was hard, so I believe there should be in-service and undergraduate training for ESP teaching."

Instructor 2: "I graduated from a Faculty of Education focused on general English teaching. After starting in higher education, I realized the need for training in ESP."

Instructor 6: "The workload can be worth it—I have learned a lot from my students, like terminology in Logistics management."

Instructor 3: "We do not have training, but I think I gained a lot in pedagogy through my experience."

As a noteworthy finding, the participating instructors indicated that some students in specific disciplines can compensate for their language limitations with strong learning abilities and extensive field knowledge, and a high motivation level as illustrated by the following:

Instructor 7: "In departments like Medicine and Electrical Engineering, students often have better English levels. Even if not, they can learn English alongside content due to their high learning ability."

Instructor 8: "In Social Services, students may not excel in English, but their high motivation enables them to learn both English and content knowledge simultaneously."

The issue of low motivation seems complex. While specific departments including Social Services, Medicine, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, and Nursing had some exceptions, all of the ESP instructors who participated in the study identified a lack of motivation due to multiple varying factors in students as one of their major challenges, as stated in the following:

Instructor 8: "In general, we encounter problems with general English. First of all, the students' belief that they can speak English is weak, there is no motivation, and they think that it is less important than other departmental courses."

Instructor 1: "In the classes, some students mention that they do not plan to pursue the profession in the future, even though they are currently studying in that department, these students make the already difficult class dynamics even more difficult and reduce motivation. Students who love their department and are interested in their profession are more participative by saying that they can use professional English in any way."

Instructor 3: "Some students are aware they need English for their careers, but they lack motivation anyway."

Instructor 8: "I think they do not value English classes well enough. They just perceive it as obligatory. A class to pass."

Instructor 2: "I think the students just couldn't personalize these classes. They believe their main courses are more important".

Overcrowded classes and pre-set procedures where instructors are not the sole decision-makers were significant challenges reported by the instructors ($n=6$). They noted that these issues were linked to various teaching and testing problems which led the instructors ($n=7$) to rely on multiple-choice tests. Additionally, some instructors ($n=2$) reported feeling isolated once assigned to these courses. Examples from participating instructors illustrate these challenges:

Instructor 6: With so many students, I can't control everyone. Those who attend benefit, but I can't evaluate the rest. In crowded classes, multiple-choice assessments become necessary, which is not ideal. The following exemplifies the issues:

Instructor 8: "We do not have enough communication with faculty instructors. I think it would be really beneficial. At least, they can check our syllabus and materials for the content."

Instructor 3: "Nobody wants these classes, but you are assigned anyway. Once placed in a faculty, you are isolated from the School of Foreign Languages, left to handle everything—syllabus, testing—on your own."

Instructor 4: "Sometimes these lessons are taught by field instructors and sometimes by EFL instructors. And so, there are different practices. So, there is an imbalance."

The data analysis revealed that ESP instructors faced challenges already noted in the literature, along with unique testing issues not previously highlighted. Additionally, the findings emphasized course planning difficulties and, in some departments, the ability of highly motivated students to learn content and language simultaneously, contrary to common findings.

What strategies do ESP instructors apply to deal with the challenges they have?

In keeping with the findings of previous studies that highlighted the seriousness of the difficulties encountered in ESP teaching environments, the present study also examined strategies used by the participating ESP instructors to combat instructional challenges encountered. In terms of the strategies used, some of the participating instructors stated that although they made an effort, they could not develop successful strategies all the time because of some circumstances such as time constraints and challenging teaching environments. Key strategies employed included using the mother tongue ($n=9$), general English materials ($n=2$), artificial intelligence (AI) and some online platforms ($n=3$), videos and visuals ($n=5$). Some instructors ($n=3$) specifically linked these resources to enhance student motivation, particularly to address the challenge of limited language proficiency in learners. Example quotes from ESP instructors are provided below:

Instructor 2: "I cannot apply successful strategies because the classes are too crowded and I am very busy."

Instructor 8: "I use Turkish for complex explanations—not just translation. This approach is crucial for motivation, as full English instruction often fails to engage students."

Instructor 5: "Coursebooks are so focused on the job content, and they do not realize the students' needs. In these kinds of books, you hardly find a language use or language strategy part. If they have, it is related to professional life. Students have some difficulties. This time, I bring the class general English materials and give a break for ESP."

Instructor 4: "I first examine the unit before each class and find general English materials especially grammar materials. It is because I want to motivate them. However, when the vocational part starts, they feel a little bit discouraged. At this stage, I use technology to re-motivate them. I show videos/visuals related to these structures, prepare online quizzes via Kahoot, let them use their smart phones. I show them how to use AI. I believe this works a lot. Even if it does not guarantee full success, they are at least, familiar with the subject. When the field teacher gives them an article, they can know the terminology and read it with tools."

Instructor 7: "I motivate students with videos, using sites for basic vocabulary learning. For example, in the Electrical and Electronics department, we watch 10-minute videos and reflect on their content. I try to make them feel comfortable with English, using tools that facilitate communication."

Some ESP instructors reported that they implemented some techniques to improve assessment methods when circumstances, such as class size, permitted. These include using various question types in exams ($n=2$), assigning term projects ($n=2$) and offering take-home exams ($n=1$). To illustrate:

Instructor 1: “I manage language level challenges with group activities and individual drafts. Take-home assignments are more effective for assessment; however, in some classes, I have to apply multiple choice tests, so I use a lot of techniques in classes, videos, pictures but exams are traditional... It is not good.”

In the category of student-centered instructional strategies and needs analysis, some ESP instructors ($n=6$) reported using group activities to enhance learning and manage crowded classes, as reaching every student can be challenging. Needs analysis, however, was less frequently employed ($n=1$). Examples include:

Instructor 6: “With classes exceeding 60 students, managing individual attention is difficult, but group work promotes peer learning. I assign a student leader for each group, which has proven effective.”

Instructor 8: “I distribute papers before each class for students to outline their expectations and learning goals. I also consult with their subject instructors about content and assign a paragraph writing task to assess language proficiency, guiding my lesson planning accordingly.”

Table 3

ESP instructors’ strategies

Categories	Themes
Using various resources and materials	Implementing AI tools and other technological resources Mother tongue use Supporting learning with general English materials Using visuals and videos
Using a variety of testing methods	Including different types of questions in exams Engaging students in term projects Take-home exams
Student-centered instructional strategies and needs analysis	Analyzing students’ needs Grouping students for in-class activities

These results reflect many challenges reported in the existing literature, where diverse educational systems across different contexts have surprisingly produced similar obstacles in ESP instruction. However, this study extends the discussion by exploring how instructors actively respond to these challenges. One of the most noteworthy findings is the emergence of coping strategies that align with the concept of translanguaging, a topic increasingly discussed in language education. Without being prompted, instructors reported using their full semiotic repertoires—such as the learners’ L1, visual aids, and digital tools—to compensate for the limitations observed, particularly when institutional conditions allowed. These findings revealed ESP instructors' efforts to transform potential disadvantages into pedagogical opportunities.

What are ESP instructors' suggestions for the design and delivery of more efficient ESP classes?

In addition to the issues identified in the previous studies, the current study sought to incorporate ESP teachers' recommendations for the enhancement of ESP teaching and learning conditions. We categorized instructors' suggestions about ESP classes around education and training programs, teaching practices and strategies, professional collaboration and cooperation, and academic research and publications (see Table 4). The most common suggestion was centered around the need for ESP-focused pre- and in-service training programs ($n=9$). Some instructors also suggested that if such training courses ($n=2$) were available, ESP instructors would have fewer challenges in both design and delivery of ESP courses, as exemplified in the following:

Instructor 1: "I think it is difficult to give lessons to instructor candidates at university because there are a lot of job contents, but there can be some certificate programs for English instructors. It would be more practical."

Table 4

ESP Instructors' Suggestions

Categories	Themes
Education and training programs	Pre-service and in-service training ESP certificate programs Standardization for ESP classes
Teaching practices and strategies	Providing placement tests Increasing the number of class sections due to crowded classes
Professional collaboration and cooperation	Cooperation with faculty members Having separate ESP units
Academic research and publications	Writing theses and articles on ESP

The notable findings in this section were about planning and cooperation both on an institutional level and within the broader context of Higher Education as illustrated below:

Instructor 3: "Department lecturers and administrators need to cooperate with English instructors. Materials can be revised in terms of content. The number of classes can be decided together. They can write articles or theses together. Because I think they think of language teaching as lecture and make adjustments accordingly, exams or I don't know, conditions allow it that way, maybe, which brings some problems".

Instructor 7: "I think there should be a standardized training system for ESP courses. There can be different practices between universities and even between instructors. Whether this is good or bad is debatable. There is no course on this subject in university programs. There is a need for a guide. YÖK (HEC) can develop a system in this regard. There could even be a certificate program for instructors to teach these courses."

Instructor 1: "I think ESP classes should be divided into groups or levels. Crowded classes are huge problems for these courses. More sections are better to teach English."

To sum up, the participating instructors emphasized the need for a more structured and collaborative approach to ESP course design and delivery. Their suggestions not only align with previously reported concerns but also extend the discussion by proposing actionable steps at institutional and national levels, such as standardized training, certification programs, and enhanced collaboration between departments. This perception may serve as a resource for policymakers, curriculum developers, and higher education institutions aiming to enhance the quality and sustainability of ESP education.

Results and Discussion

The findings in this study revealed that many problems that the participating ESP instructors stated are not context specific. Basic problems that they mentioned, such as students' diverse and limited language proficiencies, instructors' lack of undergraduate and in-service level language teaching programs specifically on ESP instruction, overcrowded classes, lack of students' engagement with class activities, and ESP instructors' heavy workloads are also the main problems observed in different contexts (Bojovic, 2006; Bracaj, 2014; Çelik et al., 2018; Hoa & Mai, 2016; Petraki & Khat, 2022). The study's findings, which drew from the responses provided by the participating instructors, elucidated the aforementioned challenges and their interconnectedness. This cross-contextual convergence suggests that ESP challenges may stem from structural aspects of higher education rather than purely local constraints.

Current literature identifies some institutional factors that can hinder ESP instruction, such as a lack of a cohesive curriculum (Chen, 2011), inconsistent course quality, limited instructional time (Ünal, 2014), and large class sizes (Suzani et al., 2011). Building on previous research, this study highlighted challenges in testing and evaluation, as reported by participants. These challenges stemmed from overcrowded classes and pre-set procedures that limit instructors' decision-making authority, a concern not emphasized in earlier studies. These constraints led many instructors to rely on multiple-choice tests. Additionally, some instructors reported feeling isolated from SFLs once assigned to these courses (Baştürkmen, 2019). These findings suggest that some of the global challenges in ESP instruction may stem from shortcomings in institutional planning. One possible reason is that course planners may not fully understand or adequately consider the specific nature of ESP instruction, or they may be constrained by other practical limitations. Therefore, institutional-level course planning in higher education needs to be revisited and aligned more closely with the distinctive requirements of ESP courses.

Students' low motivation levels were another basic problem reported in this study, as it is an issue in the literature (Çelik et al., 2018; Hoa & Mai, 2016). However, some

minority groups of students were reported to be highly motivated and therefore were able to learn both content and language simultaneously although they may have had limited language proficiency, which is a result that supports Dörnyei's (1998) assertion that high learner motivation can compensate for challenges such as inadequate course materials or an unsuitable classroom environment. Although they stated that they could not always apply useful strategies because of physical conditions such as heavy workloads and overcrowded classes, some ESP instructors reported that they employed a range of strategies to address instructional challenges, offering insights that build on prior research. While studies suggested techniques like drama and Web tools can enhance ESP instruction (Aslandemir, 2020; Saygılı, 2014; Sezgin, 2019; Zırhlı, 2021), this study highlighted instructors' use of semiotic resources—such as the students' first language, general English, artificial intelligence, and visual aids—to facilitate comprehension and engagement. These findings align with the relationship between motivation and course materials noted by previous studies (Hoa & Mai, 2016; Mede et al., 2018).

A key contribution of this study is the natural emergence of translanguaging practices in instructors' coping strategies. Canagarajah (2019) claims that semiotic resources help us communicate and understand each other and our own knowledge. Spoken or written language, pictures, and gestures are some of the many modes into which semiotic resources fall according to him. The participating ESP instructors reported using various semiotic resources, including their mother tongue, and asserted that these techniques were effective to some extent. They stated that, although achieving complete success with ESP classes was challenging because of some circumstances, the instructors observed that at least students became familiar with the subject matter and demonstrated increased motivation by independently applying these tools. This suggests that translanguaging not only emerges as a coping mechanism but also serves as a pedagogical asset in ESP contexts where learners often lack the linguistic readiness to fully engage with field-specific content.

Although the study was limited to a small number of participants thus not easily generalizable, it may have some implications for researchers, ESP instructors, instructor educators, SFLs, HEC and book providers considering teachers' suggestions. All things considered, this study may signify that the challenges encountered in ESP courses were interconnected, and planning ESP courses both at institutional and broader levels may be at the heart of these challenges because it was observed that when optimal physical conditions were held, with the aid of some tools and techniques, improvement in instruction could be possible. Beyond that, students' increased motivation seems to be crucial to compensating for most of the challenges. Undergraduate level ESP courses and in-service training programs for ESP Instructors were highlighted as central to addressing several challenges in ESP classes.

Recommendations

Ultimately, considering all the issues, the instructions provided by the participants seem to include several challenging and complex issues. Aligning with previous research, this study revealed that the lack of ESP training programs, the diversity of student language profiles, low student engagement, overcrowded classes, and ESP instructors' difficulties in designing and finding suitable course materials are among the main challenges. However, some of these challenges could be mitigated when favorable conditions were provided.

The present study delved into both the challenges abiding in several different ESP contexts around the world, and also ESP instructors' suggestions for the amelioration of ESP teaching and learning realities. Although the study was carried out with a small number of participants, it may have some implications for several stakeholders such as researchers, ESP instructors, instructor educators, SFLs, HEC and book providers: teachers' suggestions:

- Further researchers should focus on these commonly experienced challenges embedded in ESP teaching within different contexts,
- ESP instructors should consider equipping themselves with new trends in language teaching, such as using AI and translanguaging techniques for ESP instruction.
- Especially if HEC could provide certain ESP teaching courses and organizations at both pre- and in-service levels of language teaching, and set certain credentials requiring clarification (i.e., establishing standardizations for the ESP groups of learners) so that ESP instructors could be empowered.
- A lack of good planning seems to be a global problem, and it may be at the heart of ESP instruction. So, HEC and SFLs may consider replanning of these courses for the Turkish context on the basis of class sizes, establishing units, and grouping students according to proficiency levels.
- Instructor educators may consider providing undergraduate courses and in-service training specifically devoted to the ESP teaching realities.
- Coursebook providers may consider designing ESP books for lower language proficiencies rather than B2+ and higher levels.

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Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

Özel amaçlı İngilizce (ÖAİ) disiplini, belirli meslekî veya iş gruplarının dil gereksinimlerine ve davranışlarına odaklanır. Teorik çerçeveler ve sosyal koşulların dil kullanımına etkisini açıklayan eğitim çalışmaları üzerine kuruludur. ÖAİ, teori ve pratik arasındaki ayrımı sorgularken, öğrencilere akademik ve mesleki türleri tanıtır (Hyland, 2019). ÖAİ eğitimi, turizm ve konaklama gibi meslekî alanlardan uluslararası hukuk ve bankacılık gibi profesyonel sektörlere, tez ve makale yazımı gibi akademik faaliyetlere kadar farklı bağlamlarda müfredata dahil edilmektedir (Çelik, Stavicka & Odina, 2018). Hyland (2019), ÖAİ'nin dil öğretimine etkilerini ve bu alan üzerindeki etkileyici unsurları tartışmıştır. Bu etkiler; tür analizi, etnografi, eleştirel bakış açıları, kültürlerarası retorik ve sosyal yapılandırmacı teoriyi içerirken, ÖAİ'nin etkileri arasında söylem incelemesine odaklanma, öğretmenin bir araştırmacı rolü üstlenmesi, iş birliğine dayalı pedagojiler ve söylem çeşitliliklerinin önemine dikkat çekilmiştir. Hyland (2019), ihtiyaç analizinin ÖAİ öğretiminde kilit rol oynadığını ve kurumsal uygulamaların önemli olduğunu vurgulamıştır. ÖAİ, belirli meslek gruplarının veya akademik alanların dil gereksinimlerine odaklanırken, hala tam anlamıyla bir uzmanlık veya dilbilim alt disiplini olarak tanımlanmamaktadır (Swales, 2000). Ayrıca, yeterli teorik çerçevenin eksikliği (Chen, 2011) ve ÖAİ'nin önemi bariz olmasına rağmen, hem öğrenciler hem de öğretmenler için akademik bir disiplin olarak tanınırlığı hâlâ belirsizdir (Sincer, 2017; Suzani et al., 2011; Tao & Gao, 2018). Öğretmenler ve öğrenciler ders hedefleri konusunda belirsizlik yaşayabilmekte; öğrenciler hedeflerden emin olamazken öğretmenler içerik mi yoksa dil odaklı bir yaklaşım mı benimseyecekleri konusunda tereddüt yaşayabilmektedirler. Araştırmalarda, ÖAİ eğitiminde karşılaşılan ortak zorluklar arasında, öğrencilerin sınırlı dil yeterliliği veya sınıflardaki heterojen dil seviyeleri, düşük öğrenci motivasyonu, kalabalık sınıflar, öğretmenlerin materyaller konusunda yaşadığı güçlükler, ve ÖAİ öğretmenlerinin hem lisans hem de hizmetiçi düzeyde yeterli eğitim almaması gibi sorunlar öne çıkmaktadır (Çelik ve diğerleri, 2018; Hoa & Mai, 2016; Kaya, 2024). Ayrıca, geleneksel ders materyalleri yerine, öğrencilerin gerçek yaşam aktivitelerine dayalı içerikleri tercih ettiği belirlenmiştir (Mede ve diğerleri, 2018; Suzani et al., 2011). ÖAİ eğitiminde alternatif yöntemlerin etkili olabileceği bulunmuş, drama (Saygılı, 2014), durum diyalogları (Sezgin, 2019) ve web araçları (Aslandemir, 2020; Zırhlı, 2021) bu bağlamda öne çıkan yaklaşımlar arasında yer almıştır. Araştırmalar ÖAİ alanındaki çalışmaların yetersiz olduğunu (Kırkgöz & Dikilitaş, 2018), bu durumun özellikle öğretmen ve öğretim süreçlerinde söz konusu olduğunu vurgulamaktadır (Baştürkmen, 2019, s.2).

Bu çalışma, öğretim dili Türkçe olan bir Türk devlet üniversitesindeki öğretim görevlilerinin ÖAİ kapsamında verdikleri Meslekî İngilizce derslerinde karşılaştıkları zorlukları, bu zorluklarla başa çıkma stratejilerini ve bu derslerin iyileştirilmesine yönelik önerilerini incelemektedir. Bu çalışma, nitel bir vaka analizi yaklaşımıyla yürütülmüş ve gerçek hayattaki sınırlı bir sistemi derinlemesine incelemek amacıyla tasarlanmıştır (Creswell, 2013). Araştırma, yüksek öğretimde 7 yıldan fazla deneyime sahip 1 erkek ve 8 kadın olmak üzere toplam 9 İngilizce öğretim görevlisi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Tüm katılımcılar, İngilizce öğretmenliği programı mezunlarıdır ve son 3 yılda Meslekî İngilizce dersleri vermiş ya da hâlâ vermektedirler. Veriler, 10 dakikalık yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, belirli bir fenomeni anlamak için açık uçlu yanıtlar sunma imkânı tanımıştır (Dörnyei, 2007). Analizde, Hsieh ve Shannon'un (2005) yönlendirilmiş ve geleneksel içerik analizi yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. İlk araştırma sorusu için literatüre dayalı kodlama yapılırken, ikinci ve üçüncü sorular için metinlerden doğrudan çıkarılan kodlar kullanılmıştır. Verilerin geçerli ve güvenilir olmasını sağlamak için çeşitli önlemler alınmıştır. Görüşme sorularının geçerliliğini artırmak amacıyla 3 İngilizce öğretim uzmanından görüş alınmış, sorular bir pilot çalışma ile test edilmiştir. Araştırma boyunca veri toplama ve analiz süreçlerinde tutarlılık sağlamak için sistematik yöntemler izlenmiştir. Araştırmacının içeriden (emic) perspektifinin, hem verilerin toplanması hem de analizinde bağlamsal duyarlılığı artırdığı düşünülmektedir.

Araştırmanın sonuçları, öğretim görevlilerinin ifade ettiği birçok sorunun bağlama özgü olmadığını, literatürde rapor edilen diğer bağlamlarda da geçerli olduğunu göstermiştir. Farklı bağlamlardaki çalışmalara paralel olarak bu çalışmada da öğrencilerin sınırlı ve farklı dil seviyeleri, ÖAİ konusunda öğretim görevlilerine yönelik lisans ve hizmet içi eğitim eksikliği, kalabalık sınıflar, düşük öğrenci katılımı ve ağır iş yükü temel sorunlar olarak öne çıkmıştır (Bojovic, 2006; Bracaj, 2014; Çelik ve diğerleri, 2018; Hoa & Mai, 2016; Kaya, 2024; Petraki & Khat, 2022). Literatüre ek olarak bu çalışmada öğretim görevlilerinin stratejilerine ve derslerin iyileştirilmesine yönelik önerilerine de ağırlıklı yer verilmiştir. Kurumların uygulamalarından kaynaklı problemler bazı çalışmalarda vurgulanmıştır (Chen, 2011; Suzani et al., 2011; Ünal, 2014). Bu çalışmada, kalabalık sınıfların ve bazı prosedürlerinin bir sonucu olarak öğretim görevlileri sınav ve değerlendirme zorluklarından özellikle bahsetmişlerdir. Öne çıkan bir bulgu olarak öğrenci motivasyonunun düşük olduğu vurgulanırken, azınlık bir grup öğrencinin yüksek motivasyon sayesinde sınırlı dil yeterliliklerine rağmen hem içerik hem de dili aynı anda öğrenebildiği ifade edilmiştir. Bu durum, Dörnyei'nin (1998) öğrencilerin motivasyonunun yetersiz materyaller ve uygunsuz sınıf ortamı gibi zorlukları telafi edebileceği yönündeki görüşünü desteklemekte ve öğrenci motivasyonunun önemini

vurgulamaktadır. Öğretim görevlileri, bazı fiziksel koşullar nedeniyle (ör. büyük sınıflar, ağır iş yükü vb.) her zaman etkili stratejiler geliştiremediklerini ifade etmiş, ancak öğrencilerin anadil kullanımı, genel İngilizce, yapay zeka ve görsel materyaller gibi araçlarla daha iyi anladıklarını ve motive olduklarını gözlemlemişlerdir. Çalışma ayrıca, translanguaging (dil geçişkenliği) ve anlam yaratmada yarı-işaret sistemlerinin kullanımını vurgulamıştır (Canagarajah, 2019; García & Wei, 2014; Makalela, 2017; Wei, 2018). Katılımcılar, bu yöntemlerin öğrencilerin konuya aşinalığını artırdığını ve motivasyonlarını geliştirdiğini belirtmişlerdir.

Çalışmada ÖAİ derslerinde karşılaşılan zorlukların çözümüne yönelik bir dizi öneri sunulmuştur. Araştırmacıların farklı bağlamlardan daha fazla çalışma ile konuya odaklanması, ÖAİ öğretim görevlilerinin yapay zeka ve dil geçişkenliği gibi yenilikçi dil öğretim trendlerini dikkate alması, Yükseköğretim Kurulu (YÖK) ve Hazırlık Okulları'nın sınıf oluştururken öğrenci sayılarını ve öğrencilerin dil seviyelerini göz önünde bulundurarak derslerin yeniden planlanmasını değerlendirmesi, öğretmen yetiştiricilerinin lisans düzeyinde dersler ve hizmet içi eğitim programları sunmayı gözden geçirmesi ve ders kitabı sağlayıcılarının temel ve orta dil seviyeleri için de ÖAİ kitapları tasarlaması öneriler arasında yer almaktadır.

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Authors	Contact
Nurgül Doğan	Uşak University, School of Foreign Languages, Türkiye, E-mail: nurgul.dogan@usak.edu.tr
Demet Yaylı	Pamukkale University, Faculty of Education, Türkiye, E-mail: demety@pau.edu.tr