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Journal of Digital Economy

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES (ESP) IN DIPLOMAS AT KING FAISAL UNIVERSITY

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Abstract
Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in diploma programs presents unique challenges, particularly when students have limited English proficiency. This study explores the difficulties faced by both instructors and students in ESP courses at King Faisal University, focusing on diploma programs in accounting, finance, administration, and computer studies. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, data was collected through interviews with instructors and students, classroom observations, and surveys. The findings indicate that instructors struggle with explaining technical vocabulary, maintaining student engagement, and assessing ESP progress, while students face challenges in comprehending subject-specific terms, academic writing, and oral communication. Despite these challenges, certain strategies—such as task-based learning, scaffolding techniques, and technology-enhanced instruction—were found to be effective in improving student engagement and learning outcomes. Additionally, 60% of students perceive ESP courses as beneficial, though 30% suggest improvements are needed, particularly in aligning content with industry needs. Based on these findings, the study recommends enhancing instructional methods, integrating digital tools, and strengthening collaboration between ESP instructors and subject experts to better support students. While this research provides valuable insights, its scope is limited to a single institution, suggesting a need for broader studies across different educational settings. Future research should explore the long-term impact of ESP training on career readiness and the effectiveness of digital learning tools in ESP instruction.

Keywords: ESP instruction, diploma students, teaching strategies, student engagement

1. Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) plays a vital role in equipping students with the language skills necessary for success in their professional fields. ESP differs from general English in that it focuses on specific linguistic and communicative needs related to particular disciplines, such as business, finance, and computer studies (Vergara-Cabarcas, 2013). In diploma programs at King Faisal University (KFU), students in accounting, finance, administration, and computer studies are required to learn English as part of their curriculum. However, many of these students struggle due

to weak English proficiency, making it challenging to grasp technical terminology and engage effectively in their academic and professional environments.

Despite the increasing emphasis on ESP in higher education, teaching English to students with limited language skills presents several challenges. Research suggests that weak English proficiency among non-native speakers hinders their ability to comprehend course content, participate in discussions, and develop workplace-ready communication skills (Hyland, 2006; Basturkmen, 2010). At KFU, diploma students often enter their programs with minimal exposure to English, which affects their ability to understand specialized vocabulary and technical concepts. Additionally, traditional teaching approaches may not effectively address the needs of these learners, leading to disengagement and poor academic outcomes.

Several studies have highlighted the difficulties faced by both students and instructors in ESP contexts. For instance, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) argue that ESP instructors must balance linguistic instruction with subject-specific knowledge, making teaching methodologies more complex. Similarly, Anthony (2018) emphasizes that ESP instruction should be tailored to students' professional needs, incorporating real-world applications and interactive learning strategies. Given these challenges, it is essential to explore innovative teaching methods and strategies to improve ESP instruction for diploma students at KFU.

This study aims to identify the major challenges encountered in teaching ESP to students in accounting, finance, administration, and computer studies at KFU and to propose effective strategies for overcoming these difficulties. The article will first analyze the linguistic, motivational, and pedagogical challenges faced by students and instructors. It will then discuss evidence-based strategies for improving ESP instruction, including the use of technology, contextualized learning, and student-centered approaches. By addressing these issues, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on ESP pedagogy and provide practical solutions for enhancing English language education in diploma programs.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine the challenges and strategies in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to diploma students at King Faisal University (KFU). Through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, the study aims to identify the key difficulties encountered in ESP courses and evaluate the effectiveness of different teaching strategies.

The participants in this study include ESP instructors and diploma students enrolled in English courses at KFU. A purposive sampling method was used to select instructors with experience in teaching ESP within the targeted disciplines. Additionally, diploma students with varying levels of English proficiency were included to provide a diverse range of insights. In total, ten instructors and 50 students participated in the study. The instructors were interviewed about their teaching methods, the challenges they face, and the strategies they employ to support students. Students were also interviewed to share their experiences with ESP courses, including difficulties in comprehension, engagement, and assessment.

Classroom observations were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the teaching and learning dynamics in ESP courses. The observations focused on instructional techniques, student participation, and the integration of ESP materials with subject-specific content. Additionally, course materials, such as textbooks, assignments, and assessments, were analyzed to assess their alignment with students' needs and proficiency levels.

Data collected from interviews and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns in the challenges faced by both instructors and students, as well as the strategies that have been successful in ESP instruction. The findings from this analysis were categorized into major themes, including linguistic barriers, curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and student motivation.

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the study, multiple sources of data were triangulated, and participant responses were cross verified. Ethical considerations were also taken into account, with informed consent obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were assured of confidentiality, and their responses were anonymized to protect their identities.

3. Literature Review

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a branch of English language teaching that focuses on the linguistic and communicative needs of learners in specialized fields, such as business, finance, and computer science (Sekhar & Chakravorty, 2017). ESP instruction differs from general English courses as it integrates discipline-specific vocabulary, discourse structures, and communicative functions essential for professional success (Basturkmen, 2010). Given the increasing demand for English proficiency in globalized workplaces, many universities worldwide have incorporated ESP courses into their curricula (Anthony, 2018). However, research has shown that weak English proficiency among students poses significant challenges in ESP instruction, particularly in non-English-speaking countries (Hyland, 2006).

However, there are many challenges in teaching ESP to weak students**,** one of the most frequently challenges in ESP instruction is students' limited English proficiency. Weak students struggle with understanding technical vocabulary, comprehending course materials, and engaging in academic discussions (Solihah et al., 2023). According to Lustigová (2013), ESP students with low general English proficiency require additional support in language skills before they can effectively engage with specialized content. Furthermore, the lack of motivation among weak students has been identified as a significant barrier to ESP learning (Hotak et al., 2024). Studies indicate that students often perceive ESP courses as difficult and irrelevant to their professional aspirations, leading to disengagement and poor performance (Gaffas, 2019).

Another challenge is the availability and suitability of ESP teaching materials. Many ESP textbooks are designed for advanced learners, making them less accessible to weak students (Basturkmen, 2010). Instructors often find it difficult to modify existing materials to suit the proficiency levels of their students (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Furthermore, research by Gaballo (2010) emphasizes the challenge of balancing language instruction with subject-specific content, as students require both linguistic competence and technical knowledge to succeed in their fields.

The assessment of ESP students also presents difficulties. Traditional language assessments often fail to capture students' progress in learning technical vocabulary and professional communication skills (Salzinger, 2024). Instructors struggle to design evaluation methods that fairly measure students' comprehension of subject-specific content while considering their linguistic limitations (Riccardi et al., 2020).

To overcome the challenges, several studies have proposed strategies to improve ESP instruction for weak students. One approach is scaffolded learning, which involves providing structured support through simplified texts, guided practice, and interactive exercises (Mariage et al., 2018). This method has been effective in helping students build confidence and gradually improve their language proficiency. Additionally, task-based learning (TBL) has been widely recommended for

ESP instruction (Kavaliauskienė, 2005). In this approach, students engage in real-world tasks related to their professional fields, allowing them to develop language skills in meaningful contexts. Another approach is Technology-enhanced learning which has also been recognized as a powerful tool in ESP instruction (Živković, 2016). Research suggests that digital tools such as online glossaries, interactive simulations, and artificial intelligence (AI)-based language tutors can improve students' comprehension and engagement. Moreover, the integration of AI-based writing tools like Grammarly and ChatGPT has been shown to enhance students' writing accuracy and confidence (Abu Guba et al., 2024; Abu Guba et al., 2024; Fitria, 2021). These tools provide immediate feedback, allowing students to correct their mistakes and refine their writing skills. A third effective strategy is content and language integrated learning (CLIL), which combines subject instruction with language development (Shykun, 2023). This method has been successfully implemented in ESP courses to ensure that students acquire both technical knowledge and language proficiency simultaneously. Moreover, classroom interaction strategies, such as group discussions and role-playing, have been found to enhance students' communication skills and confidence in using English in professional settings (Siddiqui, 2024).

Furthermore, the role of academic support in ESP instruction cannot be ignored. Several researchers have emphasized the importance of remedial English support for weak students in ESP courses. Research indicates that students often struggle with language skills crucial to their academic and professional success, particularly in fields like medicine, science, and law (Xhaferi & Xhaferi, 2015). Challenges include difficulties in writing abstracts, oral communication, and comprehending academic sources in English. To address these issues, studies recommend implementing specialized ESP courses tailored to students' specific needs and disciplines

Furthermore, studies have shown that collaborative learning can enhance ESP instruction. For instance, studies demonstrate that CL improves communicative strategies in ESP tour guide training (Huang, 2023) and enhances students' speaking achievement in fundamental English courses (Pattanpichet, 2011). Technology-supported collaborative learning (TSCL) can further boost ESP instruction by providing more opportunities for interaction and content-specific language practice (Oleškevičienė et al., 2020).

While previous research has explored various challenges and strategies in ESP instruction, several gaps remain. Most studies focus on ESP instruction for advanced learners, leaving a limited understanding of how to support weak students effectively. Additionally, there is a lack of research on the specific difficulties faced by diploma students in non-English-speaking contexts, such as Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, although technology has been widely discussed in ESP research, studies on the integration of AI-based learning tools in ESP courses for weak students are still scarce (Chapelle & Voss, 2021). Given these gaps, this study aims to address the challenges of teaching ESP to weak students in diploma programs at King Faisal University and propose innovative strategies that align with their linguistic needs and professional aspirations. Thus, this study has two objectives as follows:

- To identify the key challenges faced by ESP instructors and weak students in accounting, finance, administration, and computer studies diploma programs at King Faisal University.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of different instructional strategies, including scaffolded learning, technology-enhanced learning, and content-integrated approaches, in improving ESP instruction for weak students.

4. Results and Discussion

The study revealed key insights into the challenges faced by both instructors and students in ESP courses at King Faisal University, along with the effectiveness of different teaching strategies. The results are categorized into three main areas: instructors' perspectives, students' experiences, and classroom observations.

4.1 Challenges Faced by Instructors in ESP Courses

Instructors reported several challenges in teaching ESP to weak students, including difficulties in comprehension, lack of motivation, and inadequate teaching materials. Table 1 presents the percentage of instructors identifying each challenge.

Table 1: Challenges Faced by ESP Instructors

Challenge	Percentage of Instructors (%)
Difficulty in explaining subject-specific vocabulary	80%
Low student engagement and motivation	75%
Inadequate ESP textbooks and materials	50%
Lack of time to provide remedial support	75%
Difficulty in assessing students' ESP progress	60%

The findings from Table 1 highlight significant challenges that ESP instructors face when teaching English to diploma students at King Faisal University. These challenges revolve around linguistic difficulties, student motivation, instructional resources, time constraints, and assessment issues, which collectively impact the effectiveness of ESP instruction.

First, the highest percentage (80%) of instructors reported struggling to explain subject-specific vocabulary. This challenge is likely due to the technical nature of English in fields like accounting, finance, administration, and computer studies, where students must learn specialized terminology. Many students enter these ESP courses with a low general English proficiency, making it harder for them to grasp industry-specific words and phrases. Additionally, ESP instructors may not always have in-depth expertise in the students' specialized fields, which can further complicate their ability to provide contextualized explanations. According to Belcher (2006) and Rachayon (2020), ESP teaching requires a balance between language instruction and subject-matter knowledge, which can be difficult for instructors who are primarily trained in language education.

Second, the data shows that 75% of instructors face challenges with low student engagement and motivation. This issue is common in ESP courses because many students do not see the immediate relevance of learning English for their specific careers (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Moreover, students with weak English backgrounds may feel frustrated and demotivated when they struggle to understand complex texts and terminology. Indeed, motivation in ESP classrooms is often linked to perceived career benefits—if students do not see a clear connection between the course and their future job opportunities, their engagement tends to decline.

To address this issue, instructors could integrate task-based learning and real-world applications of ESP concepts to make lessons more practical and engaging. For example, using case studies and simulations related to accounting or IT could help students see the usefulness of ESP skills in their future professions.

Third, half of the instructors (50%) reported that existing ESP textbooks and materials are not suitable for weak students. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that many ESP materials are not tailored to students with low English proficiency (Hyland, 2006). Standardized

ESP textbooks often assume that students already have a solid foundation in general English, which is not always the case. Additionally, textbooks may fail to align with industry-specific needs, making them less useful for students preparing for real-world job tasks. A potential solution is the development of customized ESP materials that integrate simple explanations, visual aids, and bilingual glossaries to support weaker students. As suggested by Basturkmen (2010), ESP materials should be designed based on needs analysis to match the learners' linguistic levels and professional goals.

Another major challenge reported by 75% of instructors is the lack of time for remedial support. Since diploma students often have tight academic schedules, instructors may struggle to provide individualized feedback and extra language assistance. Moreover, ESP courses are usually taught within a limited number of hours, leaving little room for reinforcement activities or one-on-one tutoring. This is a critical issue because students with weak English skills require more personalized guidance to catch up with the course content. To overcome this, institutions could introduce supplementary language support programs or self-paced online modules where students can practice outside the classroom. Providing office hours, peer tutoring, or interactive learning platforms could also help instructors manage their time more effectively.

Finally, 60% of instructors found it challenging to assess students' ESP progress effectively. This issue is partly due to the dual nature of ESP assessments, which must evaluate both language proficiency and subject-specific knowledge. Traditional English language tests may not accurately reflect students' ability to use ESP skills in professional contexts. For example, an accounting student may struggle with English grammar but still understand financial concepts. On the other hand, if assessments focus too much on technical knowledge, they may fail to measure students' language development.

The results highlight significant linguistic, pedagogical, and logistical challenges that ESP instructors face at King Faisal University. Addressing these issues requires curriculum modifications, customized teaching materials, interactive learning strategies, and improved assessment methods. By integrating contextualized ESP instruction and student-centered learning approaches, instructors can enhance student engagement, comprehension, and overall performance in ESP courses.

4.2 Challenges Faced by Students in ESP Courses

Students reported difficulties related to understanding technical vocabulary, engaging in classroom activities, and preparing for assessments. Table 2 outlines the percentage of students experiencing these challenges.

Table 2: Challenges Faced by ESP Students

Challenge	Percentage of Students (%)
Difficulty in understanding technical vocabulary	85%
Struggle with academic writing and professional communication	90%
Lack of confidence in participating in discussions	90%
Difficulty in keeping up with fast-paced lessons	85%
Perceived irrelevance of ESP content to their field	50%

Table 2 presents the major challenges that ESP students at King Faisal University face when learning English for Specific Purposes. The findings reveal significant difficulties in technical vocabulary comprehension, academic writing, classroom participation, lesson pacing, and

perceived content relevance. These challenges suggest that students struggle with both linguistic and cognitive demands of ESP courses, which can negatively impact their engagement and learning outcomes.

First, the majority of students (85%) reported difficulties in understanding technical vocabulary, indicating that specialized terminology is a major barrier in ESP courses. This finding aligns with prior research stating that subject-specific vocabulary is often abstract, complex, and highly contextualized, making it harder for students with low general English proficiency to grasp. For example, students in accounting or finance may struggle with terms like "liquidity ratio" or "amortization", while computer science students may find technical jargon such as "algorithm complexity" or "cloud computing" challenging. When students fail to understand key vocabulary, their ability to comprehend textbooks, lectures, and assessments is significantly reduced. To address this issue, instructors should integrate various vocabulary-building techniques into their teaching. One effective approach is the use of glossaries that provide simple definitions and translations, helping students grasp technical terms more easily. Additionally, implementing contextual learning through real-world examples can enhance students' understanding by linking new vocabulary to practical applications. Encouraging students to create word banks and concept maps can further support retention and organization of subject-specific terms. Moreover, incorporating multimodal learning strategies, such as visual aids, videos, and simulations, can make vocabulary acquisition more engaging and accessible, catering to different learning styles.

Second, a striking 90% of students reported struggling with academic writing and professional communication, making this the most widespread challenge. This result suggests that students have difficulty composing structured essays, reports, emails, and business correspondence, which are essential skills in ESP courses. The issue may stem from students' limited exposure to formal writing conventions and a lack of practice in industry-specific communication styles. Many diploma students are accustomed to basic English writing, but ESP requires them to analyze, summarize, and synthesize information in ways that are more demanding than general English courses. Possible solutions to improve students' writing skills include teaching genre-specific writing structures, such as financial reports and technical manuals, to familiarize students with industry-relevant formats. Conducting writing workshops and peer review sessions can provide opportunities for collaborative learning and constructive feedback. Additionally, integrating AI-assisted tools, such as Grammarly or ChatGPT, can offer students immediate feedback on grammar, coherence, and style, helping them refine their writing (Abu Guba et al., 2024). Encouraging the use of model texts and templates can further support students by providing clear examples and structured guidance for different types of professional writing.

Similar to writing difficulties, 90% of students reported low confidence in participating in discussions. This challenge is common among ESP learners, particularly those with weak speaking skills and fear of making mistakes in professional or technical conversations. Students may feel hesitant to speak up in class due to various factors, including fear of mispronouncing technical terms, limited fluency and grammar accuracy, anxiety about being judged by peers, and a lack of practice in real-world communication scenarios. To build their confidence in speaking, instructors can introduce role-playing activities related to students' fields, allowing them to practice industry-specific conversations in a supportive setting. Encouraging group discussions and debates can foster collaborative learning and help students express their ideas more freely. Additionally, implementing fluency-focused exercises rather than solely emphasizing accuracy can reduce the fear of making mistakes and promote more natural communication. Finally, incorporating speech

recognition software can provide students with personalized pronunciation practice, enhancing their spoken language skills over time.

Another major challenge is that 85% of students struggle to keep up with fast-paced lessons. Since ESP courses cover both language skills and technical content, students may find the learning load overwhelming, especially if they lack a strong English foundation (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

Fast-paced lessons can lead to cognitive overload, causing students to fall behind and disengage. This issue is particularly problematic in content-heavy subjects like finance, administration, and IT, where students need time to process complex ideas in a second language. To effectively support students, instructors should slow down the pace of instruction and offer recap sessions to ensure better comprehension. Utilizing blended learning approaches allows students to review content online at their own pace, reinforcing their understanding. Additionally, providing summaries, key takeaways, and guided notes for complex topics can help students grasp difficult concepts more easily. Incorporating interactive exercises further enhances learning by engaging students and reinforcing their understanding of the material.

Interestingly, 50% of students felt that ESP content is not relevant to their field, suggesting that a significant portion of learners do not see the direct application of English skills in their careers. This perception may arise when ESP courses rely on outdated materials that fail to reflect current industry trends. Additionally, students may feel that English is not essential for their job roles, leading to a lack of motivation. Another contributing factor is a curriculum that places excessive emphasis on generic language skills rather than real-world tasks, making the learning experience less relevant and practical.

Research by Anthony (2018) emphasizes that ESP courses must be designed with strong industry connections, ensuring that students engage with authentic workplace tasks. To enhance the relevance of ESP courses, instructors can incorporate case studies and real-world scenarios that align with industry demands. Inviting industry professionals to share insights on language use in the workplace can also help students understand its practical significance. Additionally, allowing students to work on field-specific projects using ESP skills makes learning more applicable to their careers. Implementing task-based learning that simulates workplace communication further ensures that students develop the language skills needed for professional settings.

The results highlight severe linguistic and cognitive challenges in ESP learning, particularly in technical vocabulary, writing, speaking, and lesson pacing. Pronunciation difficulties are a significant challenge for learners of English, particularly when phonological rules from their first language interfere with second language acquisition. Research on Levantine Arabic learners of English indicates that consonant gemination—previously attributed to English orthography—actually stems from deep phonological structures in the learners' first language and universal markedness constraints (Abu Guba, 2023). Moreover, pronunciation challenges extend beyond consonant difficulties to include vowel reduction, which plays a crucial role in English stress patterns. Research on Jordanian Arabic speakers shows difficulty producing the English schwa naturally, with longer vowel durations even at advanced proficiency levels (Abu Guba, 2023). This highlights vowel reduction as a persistent challenge in second language acquisition. This phenomenon persists even among advanced learners, suggesting that interface phonological issues remain a major challenge in second language acquisition.

By implementing vocabulary support tools, communication-focused activities, and industry-aligned learning materials, instructors can enhance ESP instruction and help students bridge the gap between academic learning and professional readiness.

4.3 Effectiveness of Teaching Strategies Used in ESP Courses

The study highlighted the effectiveness of various teaching strategies, including scaffolding techniques, task-based learning, and technology-enhanced instruction. Table 3 presents the effectiveness ratings based on instructor and student feedback.

Table 3: Effectiveness of Teaching Strategies

Teaching Strategy	Effectiveness Rating (1-5 Scale)
Scaffolding (step-by-step explanations)	4.5
Task-based learning (real-world exercises)	4.2
Technology-enhanced learning (AI tools, digital resources)	4.0
Group discussions and peer learning	3.8
Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)	3.5

Table 3 presents the effective ratings of various teaching strategies employed in ESP courses at King Faisal University. The results indicate that scaffolding and task-based learning are the most effective, while content and language integrated learning (CLIL) received the lowest rating. These findings highlight the importance of structured support and practical engagement in ESP instruction.

First, scaffolding, rated 4.5, emerged as the most effective teaching strategy. This approach involves breaking down complex concepts into smaller, more manageable steps, providing guidance and support before gradually allowing students to work independently.

The high effectiveness of scaffolding in ESP courses aligns with previous research, which suggests that incremental learning helps weaker students understand subject-specific vocabulary and concepts. By providing simplified explanations, guided practice, and progressive difficulty levels, instructors can enhance students' comprehension and confidence. To further enhance scaffolding, instructors can use visual aids and bilingual glossaries to reinforce meaning and support comprehension. Providing worked examples before assigning independent tasks helps students build confidence and understand expectations. Additionally, implementing a gradual withdrawal of support encourages self-reliance, allowing students to develop their skills independently while still benefiting from guided learning.

Second, task-based learning (TBL) received a high effectiveness rating of 4.2, indicating that students benefit from hands-on, practical exercises related to their fields. This approach focuses on real-world communication tasks, such as writing business reports, conducting financial analyses, or participating in workplace simulations.

The success of TBL in ESP courses is achievable when students retain language better when learning through meaningful, contextualized tasks. By engaging in industry-specific assignments, students develop both linguistic proficiency and professional competencies. To enhance the effectiveness of task-based learning (TBL), instructors should design authentic, career-oriented tasks that align with students' specific disciplines. Providing clear learning objectives and structured feedback ensures that students understand expectations and can track their progress. Additionally, encouraging collaborative projects fosters peer interaction, allowing students to develop communication skills and learn from one another in a meaningful, real-world context.

Third, the integration of technology-enhanced learning, including AI-powered tools, interactive platforms, and digital resources, received a solid effectiveness rating of 4.0. This finding highlights

the growing role of educational technology in ESP instruction, where students can use digital tools to enhance vocabulary, improve writing, and practice communication skills.

Recent studies (Abu Guba et al., 2024) suggest that AI-powered feedback tools like Grammarly and ChatGPT help students refine their writing, while online simulations and gamified learning platforms boost engagement. Technology also enables self-paced learning, allowing students to review materials independently. To further enhance the use of technology in ESP courses, instructors can incorporate AI-driven writing assistants to help students improve their grammar and vocabulary. Utilizing learning management systems (LMS) allows for the efficient distribution of digital resources, making learning more accessible. Additionally, integrating multimedia content such as videos, podcasts, and interactive modules provides diverse learning experiences, catering to different learning styles and increasing student engagement.

Fourth, group discussions and peer learning received a moderate effectiveness rating of 3.8. While these activities promote collaborative learning and encourage students to practice speaking, some students, especially those with low confidence—may hesitate to participate actively. Peer learning can be especially effective when students actively engage in collaborative activities. Encouraging them to clarify concepts to one another helps reinforce their understanding and deepen their knowledge. Role-playing exercises related to their fields provide practical experience and enhance their ability to apply language skills in real-world scenarios. Additionally, working on joint projects fosters teamwork and communication, preparing students for professional interactions in their respective industries.

However, the effectiveness of group discussions relies on active participation and structured facilitation by instructors. To enhance outcomes, instructors can assign specific roles to students, ensuring that everyone contributes meaningfully. Providing discussion prompts related to workplace scenarios helps make conversations more relevant and engaging. Additionally, encouraging peer feedback sessions for writing and presentations fosters collaboration and allows students to refine their communication skills through constructive critique.

Finally, content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) received the lowest effectiveness rating of 3.5, suggesting that students may struggle with learning both technical subjects and English simultaneously. CLIL involves teaching subject content (e.g., finance, computer science) in English, requiring students to develop technical knowledge and language skills at the same time. While Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has been successful in multilingual education settings, its lower effectiveness in ESP courses may stem from several challenges. Students with weak general English proficiency often struggle to grasp subject-specific content, while cognitive overload can occur as they attempt to understand both the language and technical concepts simultaneously. Additionally, limited instructor training in CLIL methodologies can impact lesson delivery and overall effectiveness. To improve CLIL implementation, instructors can use simplified language and provide bilingual support materials to aid comprehension. Integrating pre-lesson vocabulary sessions can better prepare students for technical content, while combining CLIL with other scaffolding techniques helps reduce cognitive load and enhance learning outcomes.

The findings indicate that structured support (scaffolding) and practical engagement (TBL) are the most effective strategies in ESP instruction. Meanwhile, technology-enhanced learning is increasingly beneficial, while group discussions and CLIL require further refinement to maximize their impact.

To optimize ESP instruction, instructors should adopt a blended approach, integrating high-impact strategies while addressing the specific needs of weak students. Future research could explore how

personalized learning approaches and adaptive technologies can further enhance ESP effectiveness.

4.4 Student Engagement and Participation in ESP Classes

Classroom observations showed varying levels of student engagement depending on the teaching method used. Table 4 presents the student engagement rates for different teaching activities.

Table 4: Student Engagement in ESP Activities

Activity Type	Student Engagement (%)
Group discussions and role-playing	65%
Task-based exercises related to their field	70%
Traditional lectures with limited interaction	55%
Individual writing assignments	50%
Online exercises and quizzes	65%

Table 4 presents the student engagement levels across various ESP activities, highlighting which instructional methods encourage active participation. The data suggests that task-based exercises and group discussions are the most engaging, while individual writing assignments and traditional lectures show lower engagement levels.

First, task-based exercises, with the highest engagement level (70%), prove to be the most effective in maintaining students' interest. These exercises require students to apply English skills in real-world, career-relevant contexts, such as writing financial reports, creating presentations, or conducting mock business meetings.

To enhance engagement in task-based learning, instructors should tailor activities to align with students' specific disciplines, such as finance, IT, or administration. They should also design scenarios that closely reflect real-world workplace challenges, ensuring that students can apply their knowledge in practical situations. Additionally, incorporating collaborative tasks that encourage teamwork will help students develop essential communication and problem-solving skills while fostering a more interactive and dynamic learning environment.

Second, group discussions and role-playing activities also receive a high engagement level of 65%, indicating that peer interaction enhances learning. When students discuss industry-related topics or simulate workplace scenarios, they develop fluency, critical thinking, and confidence. However, some students may be reluctant to participate due to low confidence or fear of making mistakes. To overcome this challenge, instructors can assign specific roles in discussions, such as presenter, note-taker, or analyst, to encourage active involvement. Additionally, scaffolding conversations by providing key phrases and vocabulary lists can help students feel more prepared and comfortable. Introducing low-stakes, informal discussions before formal presentations can further build confidence and create a supportive learning environment.

Third, online exercises and quizzes also engage 65% of students, demonstrating that digital tools help reinforce learning and provide immediate feedback. Research shows that interactive platforms, such as AI-driven quizzes and adaptive learning software, can boost motivation (Abu Quba et al., 2024).

The moderate engagement suggests that self-paced learning benefits students, particularly those struggling with ESP concepts. However, engagement could be further enhanced by incorporating gamified quizzes with rewards to maintain student interest and motivation. Additionally, using AI-generated feedback can offer personalized learning experiences, helping students identify areas for

improvement. Integrating collaborative online activities can also foster peer learning while leveraging technology to create a more interactive and engaging educational experience.

Fourth, traditional lectures with limited interaction show relatively low engagement (55%), reinforcing the notion that passive learning reduces motivation. ESP courses often require active engagement yet lectures primarily focus on information delivery rather than application. Although lectures are essential for explaining complex concepts, engagement can be enhanced by incorporating interactive elements such as polls and Q&A sessions to encourage participation. Using case studies and examples relevant to students' fields can make the content more relatable and applicable. Additionally, allowing short peer discussions after introducing key concepts can reinforce understanding and promote active learning.

Finally, individual writing assignments received the lowest engagement rating (50%), suggesting that students struggle with writing tasks in ESP courses. This finding aligns with Table 2, where 90% of students reported difficulties with academic writing and professional communication.

Writing in ESP requires both language proficiency and technical accuracy, which can overwhelm students (Hyland, 2006). To increase engagement, instructors can offer structured writing templates for reports, emails, and proposals to help students organize their ideas effectively. Implementing peer review sessions can encourage collaborative learning by allowing students to provide and receive constructive feedback. Additionally, introducing AI-based writing tools such as Grammarly and ChatGPT can offer extra support, helping students refine their writing skills and improve their overall communication.

The results suggest that active, career-focused, and technology-supported activities generate higher engagement in ESP courses. Task-based exercises and group discussions are the most engaging, while traditional lectures and writing assignments need additional interactive elements to boost participation.

By integrating more real-world tasks, peer collaboration, and digital tools, instructors can create a more student-centered learning environment, ensuring that ESP courses effectively prepare students for their professional fields.

4.5 Perceived Usefulness of ESP Courses for Professional Readiness

The study revealed students' perceptions of how useful ESP courses are for their future careers. Table 5 presents the responses.

Table 5: Student Perceptions on ESP Course Usefulness

Perception	Percentage of Students (%)
ESP courses are highly relevant and beneficial	60%
ESP courses are somewhat relevant but need improvement	30%
ESP courses are not useful for their careers	10%

Table 5 presents students' perceptions regarding the usefulness of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses in their academic and professional development. The data indicates that 60% of students find ESP courses highly relevant and beneficial, while 30% believe improvements are needed, and 10% do not see them as useful for their careers.

The fact that 60% of students view ESP courses as highly relevant suggests that a significant portion recognizes the value of learning industry-specific English skills. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing that ESP courses enhance students' employability by equipping them with essential communication skills for their fields (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Students who find ESP courses beneficial likely value the opportunity to learn technical vocabulary specific

to their discipline, such as finance, IT, or administration. They also appreciate gaining practical writing skills, including composing emails, reports, and business proposals. Additionally, developing professional communication competencies, such as delivering oral presentations and participating in meetings, helps them prepare for real-world workplace interactions.

This positive perception reinforces the importance of aligning ESP content with industry demands to ensure students see direct benefits in their future careers.

Second, 30% of students find ESP courses somewhat relevant but need improvement to highlight areas where course design and delivery can be refined. Previous studies indicate that ESP effectiveness depends on how well course content meets students' professional needs. Common areas for improvement may include incorporating more industry-specific case studies and practical tasks to enhance relevance and applicability. Better integration of technology and digital tools can also enrich the learning experience and keep students engaged. Additionally, fostering stronger connections between ESP instructors and subject specialists can ensure that course content aligns closely with industry needs and expectations. By addressing these concerns, ESP courses can become more engaging, practical, and tailored to students' career aspirations.

Third, 10% of students who do not find ESP courses useful may feel that the course content does not align with their specific field or career goals. This perception may arise from a lack of customization in ESP materials for different specializations, a preference for learning English through general or informal methods, or a belief that technical skills are more valuable than language skills. To address these concerns, ESP courses should conduct needs analyses before course design to ensure content aligns with student expectations. Offering flexible learning pathways that allow students to select ESP modules relevant to their interests can enhance engagement. Additionally, increasing collaboration with industry professionals can help demonstrate the importance of English in real workplace settings.

The findings suggest that while most students (60%) appreciate ESP courses, a significant 30% believe improvements are needed, and a minority (10%) question their usefulness. By refining course content, instructional strategies, and real-world applications, ESP programs can increase their impact and ensure relevance for all students.

5. Conclusion, Recommendations, and Limitations

This study examined the challenges and strategies in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in diploma programs at King Faisal University, focusing on both instructor and student perspectives. The findings highlight key difficulties faced by instructors, such as explaining subject-specific vocabulary, engaging students, and assessing progress. Students also struggle with technical vocabulary, academic writing, and participation in discussions. Despite these challenges, certain teaching strategies, task-based learning, scaffolding, and technology-enhanced instruction were found to be effective in improving engagement and learning outcomes. However, the effectiveness of ESP courses varies, with some students recognizing their value while others feel the content needs better alignment with their career aspirations.

To enhance the effectiveness of ESP instruction, several improvements can be made. First, customizing ESP materials by incorporating real-world, industry-specific content tailored to students' disciplines can make learning more relevant and practical. Second, increasing student engagement through interactive methods such as peer learning, role-playing, and problem-based tasks can create a more dynamic and participatory learning experience. Third, integrating AI-based learning tools, digital assessments, and industry-specific online resources can further enhance the use of technology in ESP courses. Fourth, strengthening collaboration between ESP instructors and subject specialists will help ensure that course content remains relevant and aligned with

industry demands. Finally, offering remedial support through extra workshops and targeted interventions can provide struggling students with the assistance they need to succeed.

This study is limited in scope as it focuses only on one institution (King Faisal University), which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, self-reported data from surveys and interviews may contain biases based on participants' perceptions. Future research could expand the sample size, compare ESP strategies across multiple institutions, and explore the long-term impact of ESP training on students' career readiness.

Ethics Statement

All procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation. The standards are also in line with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2000. Informed consent was obtained from all participants for being included in the study.

Data Availability

Data is available on request.

Funding Statement

This work was supported by the Deanship of Scientific Research, Vice Presidency for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research, King Faisal University, Saudi Arabia. GRANT KFU250976.

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