

Exploring Algerian ESP Teachers' Approach Preference to Design English for Business Purposes Courses: A Genre-Based Perspective

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Abstract:

In the evolving landscape of business English education, understanding English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers' preferences is crucial. From a genre-based perspective, this study examines Algerian ESP teachers' approach preferences in designing English for business purposes courses. The research was conducted at Djelfa and Laghouat universities and involved eight (08) ESP teachers. An open-ended exploratory questionnaire was used to explore the teachers' views. The findings reveal that the teachers prefer a blended approach to ESP course design in general and EBP in particular because of its practical relevance and effectiveness in preparing students for business environments. Teachers also favor genre-specific elements, but their integration and confidence in striking a balance between the learners' needs and the target business requirements pose concerns. Such challenges in implementing these methods suggest a need for additional teacher development, teacher collaboration, and regular course reviews.

Keywords: Approaches to ESP; EBP Course Design; Genre, Teachers' Preferences

Jel Classification Codes: XN1, XN2.

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1. INTRODUCTION

With its emphasis on adapting courses to meet the particular needs of individual students, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a major area of study in English language instruction. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), ESP is an instructional tool that adapts teaching resources and approaches to students' specific goals and motivations. ESP courses aim to equip students with the necessary language proficiency for their academic or professional pursuits.

To this sense, developing an ESP course mostly focuses on the process of identifying the specific requirements and preferences of the students. With an eye on teaching students the intricate grammatical elements and specific terminology of many fields, ESP focuses on bridging the gap between their present and future skills or demands.

According to Britel and Sebane (2023), course design involves examining data on the learning needs to produce a disciplined succession of instructional events and experiences. To attain the desired learning outcomes, this process involves the development of a curriculum, the choosing or customization of content, the development of teaching strategies, and the building of evaluation mechanisms. Similarly, McGee and Reis (2012) underline how important excellent course design is to support active learning and raise teaching effectiveness. Although students' communicational demands have been the subject of significant research, the ESP teacher's function has received far less attention. This disparity suggests the need for more research on the ways in which educators influence and help increase the efficacy of ESP courses.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Main Approaches to ESP Course Design

The many methods of ESP course design reflect the several needs of students and the particular situations in which English is taught. Among the most well-known approaches is the Needs Analysis one (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). This method emphasizes on the particular language abilities and skills that students have to have for their academic or occupational positions. This method involves the acquisition of comprehensive information regarding the students' objectives, which is subsequently used to inform the development of the course syllabus, resources, and teaching strategies.

Another well-known approach stressing the use of authentic assignments representing real-life occurrences students potentially come across in their work environments is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). This approach is in line with the idea that students engaged in meaningful tasks requiring the use of target language abilities will find their language learning most effective (Ellis, 2003).

Hyland (2007) reports that genre-based methods are also very useful when planning ESP classes in subjects that use certain types of texts like research papers, emails, and reports. This method is based on teaching students how to find and write different types of writing that are important in their own fields of study; it helps students learn the skills they need to communicate effectively in specific professional or academic situations. Also, it focuses on the structure and function related to those writing types.

The choice of an ESP course design approach is predominantly influenced by the individual requirements of the students, the course objectives, and the professional or academic contexts in

which they will require English language support. The ultimate objective is to equip students with the language skills necessary to excel in their respective disciplines whether through Needs Analysis, Task-Based Language Teaching, or Genre-Based Approaches. The relevance and efficacy of ESP education are significantly enhanced by the effective implementation of these choices.

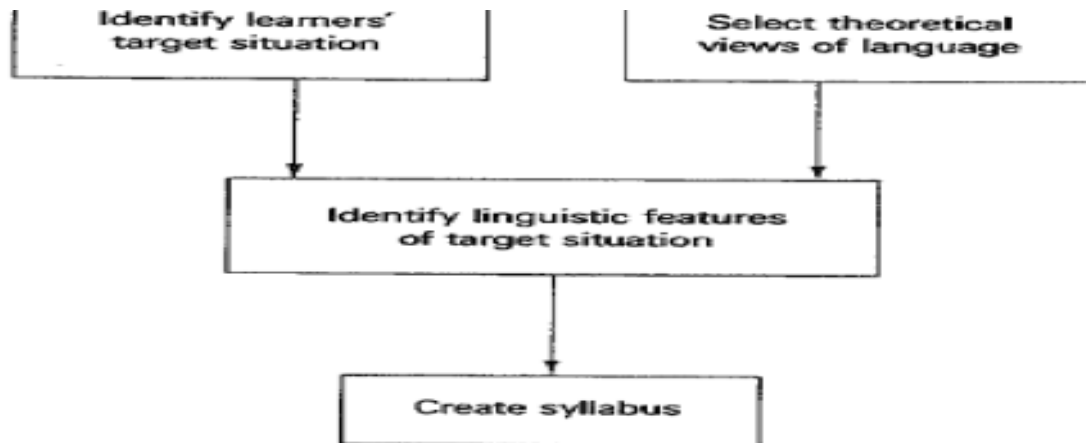


Figure 01. Approaches to Course Design. (Hutchinson and Waters, 1984:110)

2.2 Genre for ESP Course Design

Genre analysis is a systematic approach that aims to identify different types of writings within a particular domain and uncover common textual features. For example, it entails the examination of various texts that are essential for efficient communication among a group of managers inside a firm. Woodrow (2018) asserts that genre has emerged as a prominent determinant of ESP in recent times. An ESP viewpoint on genre is highly helpful since it provides crucial insights for the development of contemporary instructional materials.

Genre-based approaches in ESP course design provide an instructional framework for understanding and teaching language in particular and specialized contexts. By emphasizing the communicative aims and norms of genres unique to some sectors or specializations, including scientific academic writing or commercial communication, this approach enhances the language and rhetorical skills of learners. When concentrating on these disciplines, students can cultivate the necessary skills for effective communication in both their academic and professional environments.

Using genre analysis, teachers may well identify the recurrent trends in language use, textual features, and communicative methods particular to certain genres. This information helps teachers design contents and apply the techniques which fairly represent the real communication needs of their students. Their involvement in real genre-oriented activities such of analyzing and composing texts relevant to their field of study fosters a more thorough knowledge of many genres and the capacity to communicate effectively inside their intended communities.

Ultimately, by matching language instruction with the exact communicative demands of learners, genre-based approaches provide a teaching framework that greatly enhances language development.

2.3 Business English

English has become the standard language for international commercial dealings and globalization is accelerating. As a result, non-native speakers of English are increasingly using the language. English is currently used more frequently to discuss business with individuals all around the world including employees, customers, and clients who do not speak English as their first language.

According to Belcher (2009), English for Business Purposes (EBP), a subset of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), has seen substantial development. EBP may be regarded as an umbrella word including English for Economics and Management. This genre of language is specialized to suit specific contexts and purposes. Hence, it allows students to comprehend intricate economic and management theories in English. This is known as English for Economics and Management. In addition, it provides them with the capacity to communicate effectively in a professional environment which includes the development of business letters and other pertinent modalities of interaction. Thereby, these courses may encompass a range of topics as texts pertaining to business English, idioms used in commerce or economics, and terminology associated with advertising and marketing.

This new way of teaching languages is based on the notion that students should learn the language skills required to perform in a globalized corporate world. These courses ensure that students cannot only understand complex theoretical concepts, but also talk clearly in their professional lives; a competence centered around emphasizing the specific language requirements of the targeted field.

2.4 Needs Analysis

According to Richards and Platt (1992), the process of needs analysis is crucial for establishing a solid foundation for course design that effectively addresses the requirements of a specific group of students. Needs Analysis (NA) is defined as the systematic process of identifying and organizing the linguistic needs of learners based on their importance. In an ESP class, needs analysis means figuring out what language skills students need to be able to function in their prospective careers. Hutchinson and Waters (1987), classify needs into three major groups. These are lacks, wants and necessities. Necessities are the skills needed to navigate and execute in certain situations. While lacks pertain to the gap between the competencies that students possess and those which are necessary to have, wants are the requirements that students perceive. ESP course designers ought to necessarily account for these differences in view of materials and teaching procedures. An ESP teacher undergoing a needs analysis must collect information about his or her learners' particular needs and decide upon the most effective strategies to meet them.

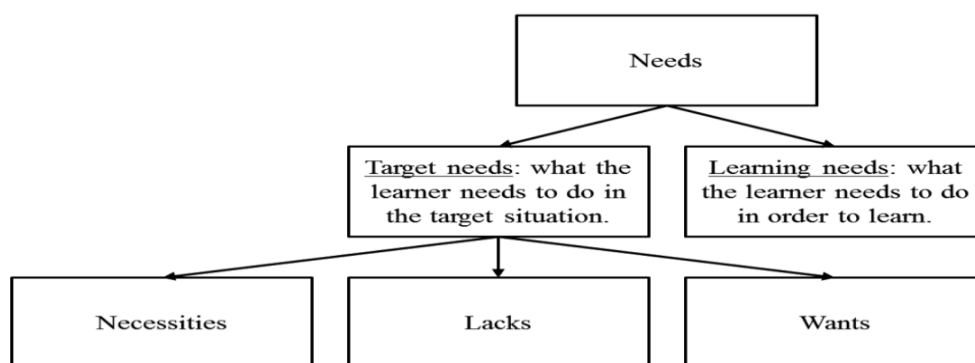


Figure 02. Hutchinson & Waters' (1987) Classification of Needs Analysis

2.5 Present Situation Analysis Vs Target Situation Analysis

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) contend that building an ESP course mostly on expected results or starting conditions is unworkable. Rather, one should always evaluate the needs, possibilities, and restrictions of the learning environment. Present needs are those which enable students to reach the necessary skills from their current state of knowledge or ability. Target needs, as also described by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), are the precise needs, deficits, and wants that learners must address in order to fulfill the required duties in a given setting. This complete notion combines key criteria, skill gaps, and learner goals. For instance, students in Economics and Management must develop the ability to read scientific literature, compose professional documents such as reports and emails, and develop exceptional oral communication skills for responsibilities such as interviews, phone calls, and meetings with foreign peers. It is vitally required to close the discrepancy between the given needs and learners' shortcomings. By means of a Current Situation Analysis (CSA), teachers should identify any particular language skills lacking and consequently assess their students' language ability; usually applied in this particular situation are diagnostic tests.

3. Methodology

3.1 Problematic

Owing to the interdisciplinarity of ESP as a subject, the versatile set of needs related to the learners, and the ever-evolving changes in the job market requirement, teachers often find it challenging to make pedagogical choices on the ideal approach to design their ESP courses, business English for our case. Henceforth, there is a necessity to explore the teachers' preferences, viewpoints, and attitudes regarding such a prominent aspect of specific language instruction.

3.2 Research Questions

This study aims to use the following questions to probe ESP teachers' approach preferences:

1. What are the primary factors influencing teachers' pedagogical approach while creating English for Business Purposes (EBP) courses?
2. What significance does genre-based instruction have in the EBP course design processes?

3.3 Research Hypotheses

This study is grounded on two hypotheses to address the research questions:

1. Factors including industry relevance, learner needs, and course objectives mostly determine the pedagogical methods teachers choose.
2. Teachers who understand the value of genre in EBP course design are more likely to apply genre-based instruction to properly handle and reduce difficulties in the teaching-learning process.

3.4 Research Objectives

This study attempts to identify the key factors that influence teachers' selection of pedagogical approaches in the design of English for Business Purposes (EBP) courses. Apart from that, it emphasizes on investigating how genre may be included into EBP course development and evaluating instructors' opinions of its relevance in conquering obstacles in the teaching-learning process. With an emphasis on genre-specific communication practices, one last goal of this study is to assess how the teachers' chosen pedagogical approaches affect the alignment of EBP course content with contemporary business expectations.

3.5 Research Significance

The need of the global market and the precision of language needed in corporate environments make English for Business Purposes ever more important. Therefore, EBP courses must change to fit specific language requirements as global demands increase. Consequently, our current work can provide decent contributions to theory and practice. It would explore teachers' decision-making process in choosing approaches for EBP course design, match teaching practices with the learner and industry needs, close gaps between pedagogical strategies and real-world business demands. These would result in improving the efficacy of EBP instruction and better equipping students for the global marketplace.

3.6 Methods

This present study adopts an exploratory qualitative research design. It aims at examining the teachers' opinions, the placement and utility of genre to EBP instruction, and to fit between course contents and industry needs. It also seeks to pinpoint to the elements affecting instructors' choice of pedagogical approaches concerned with EBP course design.

3.7 Sample

08 male and female ESP teachers from the universities of Djelfa and Laghouat participated in this exploratory qualitative research attempt. The sample was of variance in terms of teaching experience and expertise in course design.

3.8 Data Collection and Analysis Tools

This research was carried out utilizing an open-ended exploratory questionnaire that was electronically mailed to the participants to provide accurate and trustworthy data concerned with the teaching staff. This strategy allows one to gather reasonable points of view generally related to actual events. This type of knowledge guides educators and stakeholders on the necessary choices they are held responsible of making.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

08 ESP teachers took part in the study. They were all granted confidentiality and each activity conducted throughout this research was processed with their total explicit agreement.

They were familiarized with the particular chores they had to perform. Also, the respondents enjoyed the right to withdraw from the study at any moment.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Teachers' Questionnaire

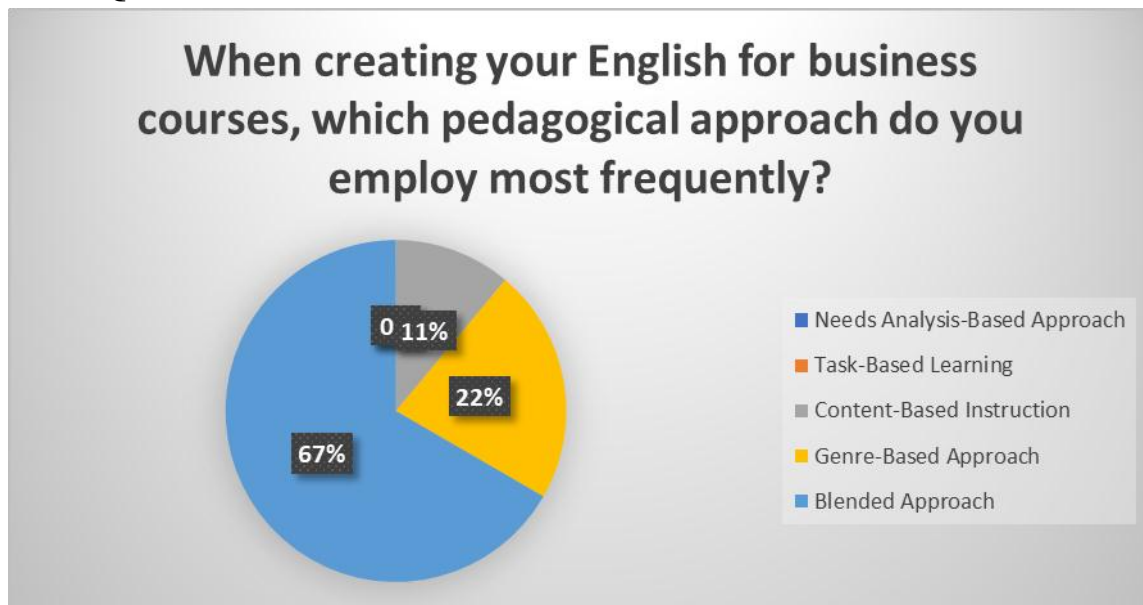


Figure 03. The Teachers' Approach Preference

According to the results of first question, 67% of the teachers used a relatively mixed strategy for designing their EBP courses. Fascinatingly, 22% of them said that they favored the genre-based approach while 11% handled their instruction according to the content-based strategy. Regarding EBP, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Though they combine several strategies, teachers clearly favor genre-based learning.

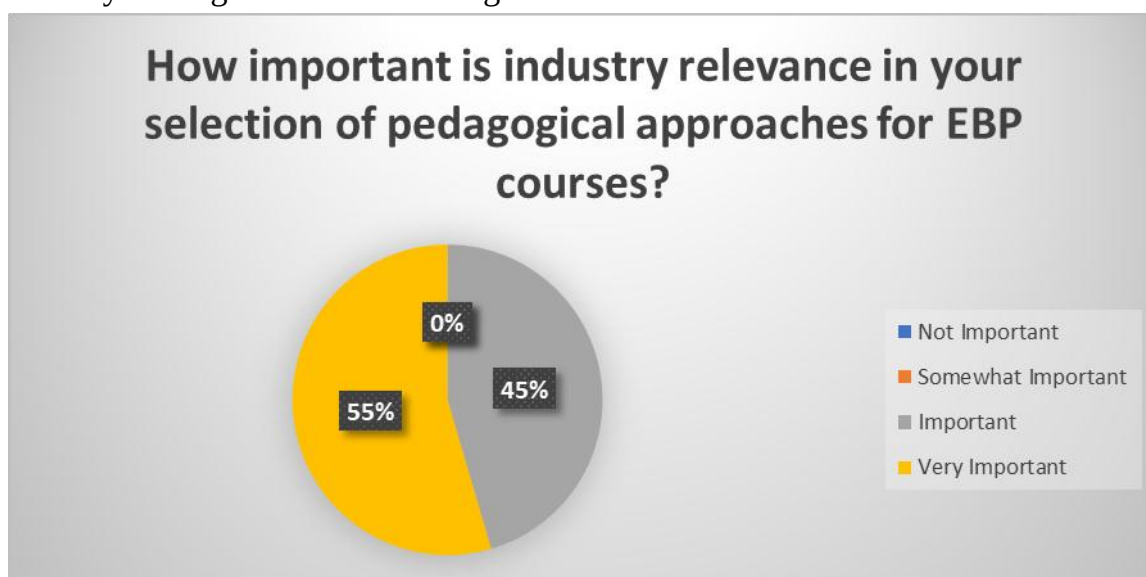


Figure 04. Target Requirements Importance in EBP Approach Selection

The majority of the teacher participants here indicated a general consensus on the relevance of tailoring their EBP courses in light of the target business language requirements. This comes with 55% of them having strong agreement and 45% of the remaining representation with moderate agreement views. This highlights the crucial role that real-world business contexts play

in shaping course content and instructional methods.

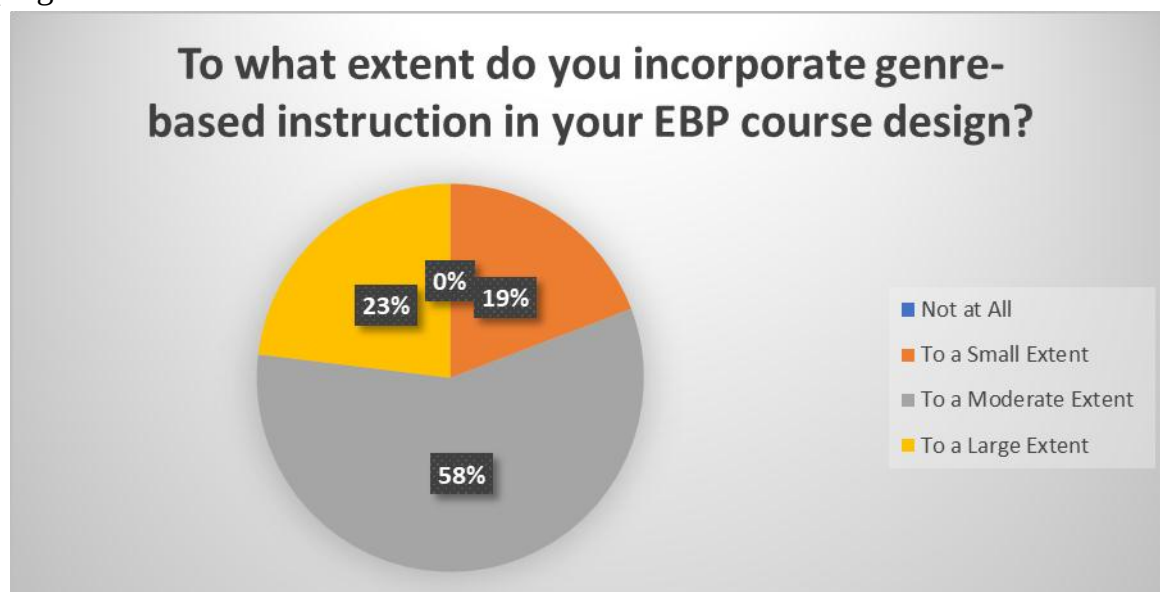


Figure 05. Genre-based Instruction Incorporation in EBP Course Design

This third question reports that most of the teachers, 58%, agreed to a moderate extent on the practice of integrating genre-based instruction into their EBP courses. Only 23% of the respondents had included the issue to a significant degree; so, we have a 19% identifying their teaching style with a limited extent incorporation. Most teachers, who understand its value in EBP courses, included genre-based instruction from a modest to significant degree. Teachers judging it either "Moderately Challenging" or "Very Challenging" acknowledged the difficulties involved in genre integration, though.

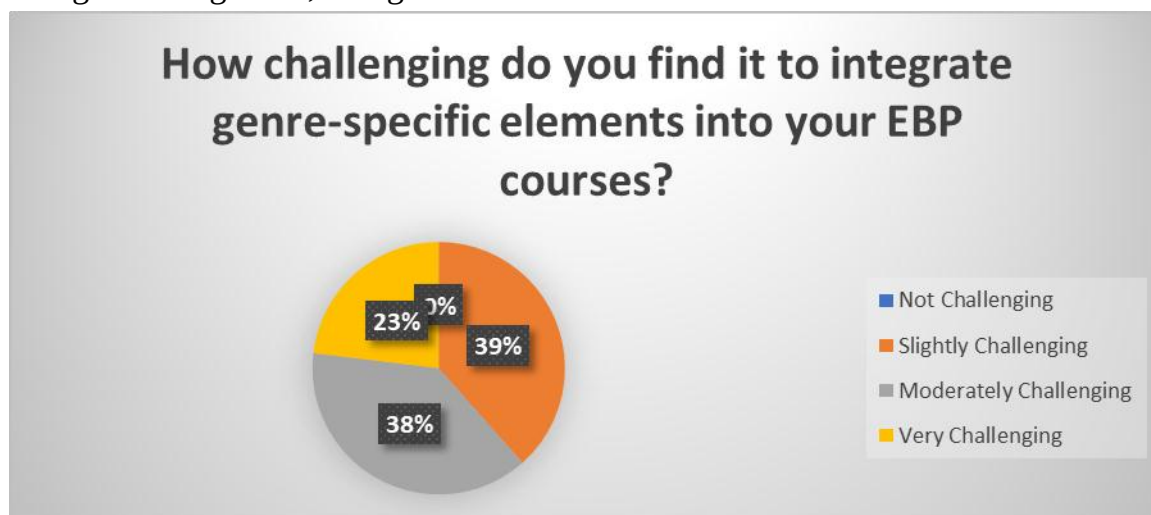


Figure 06. Challenges Experienced While Integrating Genre-specific Elements into EBP Courses

Data from this question indicate that almost 76% (38+38) of the participants confronted challenges whilst integrating genre-specific elements into their EBP courses. To the same sense, 23 % conceived the subject being as very challenging. Teachers are using genre-based instruction quite a bit, especially when it comes to teaching specific business communication formats like reports and emails. However, they also face some challenges in making it work effectively.

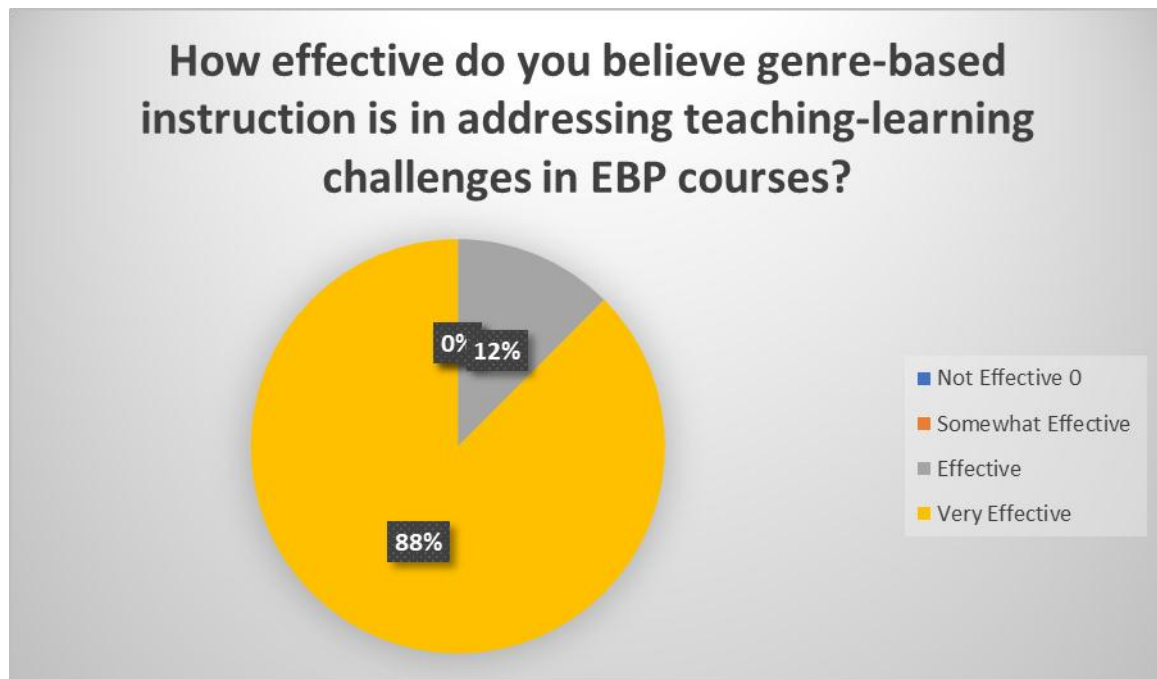


Figure 07. Genre-based Instruction Effectiveness in Addressing Challenges in EBP Courses

This question shows that there is a shared agreement from the part of the teachers on the effectiveness of genre-based elements in providing solutions to learning issues. A 100 % (88+12) of them expressed rather positive view with regard to the concern raised. Despite of the challenges associated with integrating genre-based elements into the ESP course, such goes to prove that the participants still consider their concrete productivity for the students when navigating through business communications.

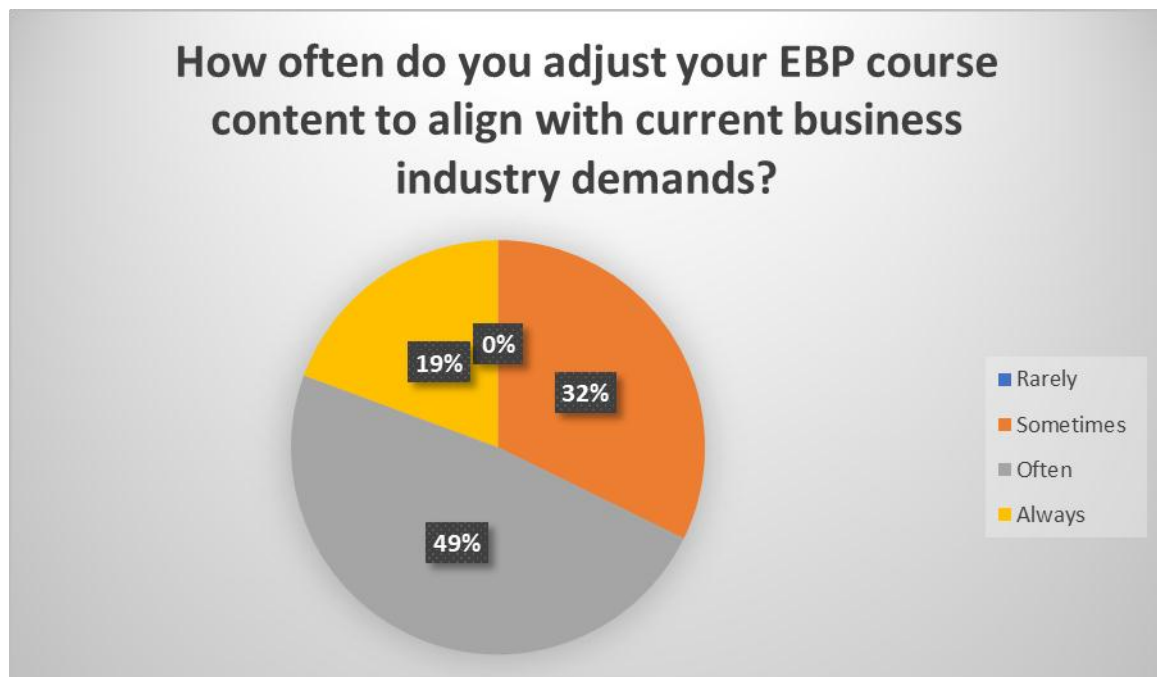


Figure 08. EBP Course Content Adjustment Frequency Towards Current Business Demands

Considering the frequency of modifying EBP training to fit the target business, roughly half of the respondents said they do so regularly. While 19% of them identified their frequency with

always, 32% of them also indicated occasionally as their choice. Teachers are constantly adjusting their curriculum to match the state of the corporate sector. Students are gaining current abilities they can use right away from this ongoing change.

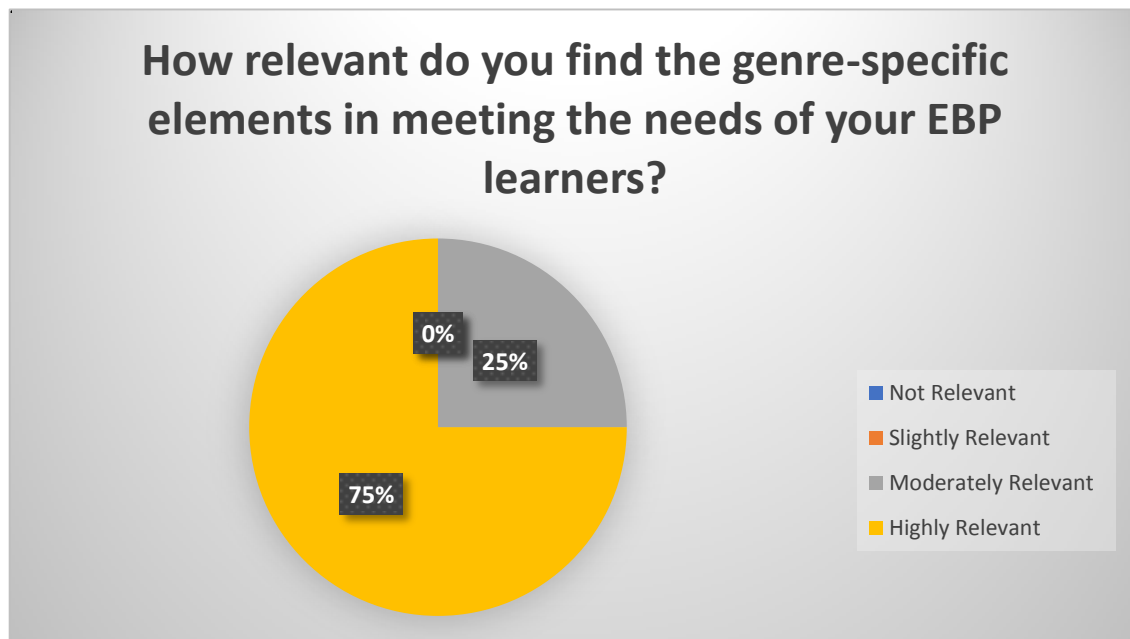


Figure 09. Genre-Specific Elements Relevance for Learner Needs Fulfillment

The majority of the ESP teachers involved, 62 %, answered that they believe genre-specific elements are indeed moderately effective in meeting the needs of their business English learners. Similarly, the remaining 38 % of them declared that it is of high relevance to them to consider the above-mentioned strategies in matching up with the needs of the learners they are in charge of. Most teachers believe that teaching specific genres is a good way to tackle the challenges of teaching EBP. They consider it as an effective strategy for helping students master the types of communication they will need in the business world.

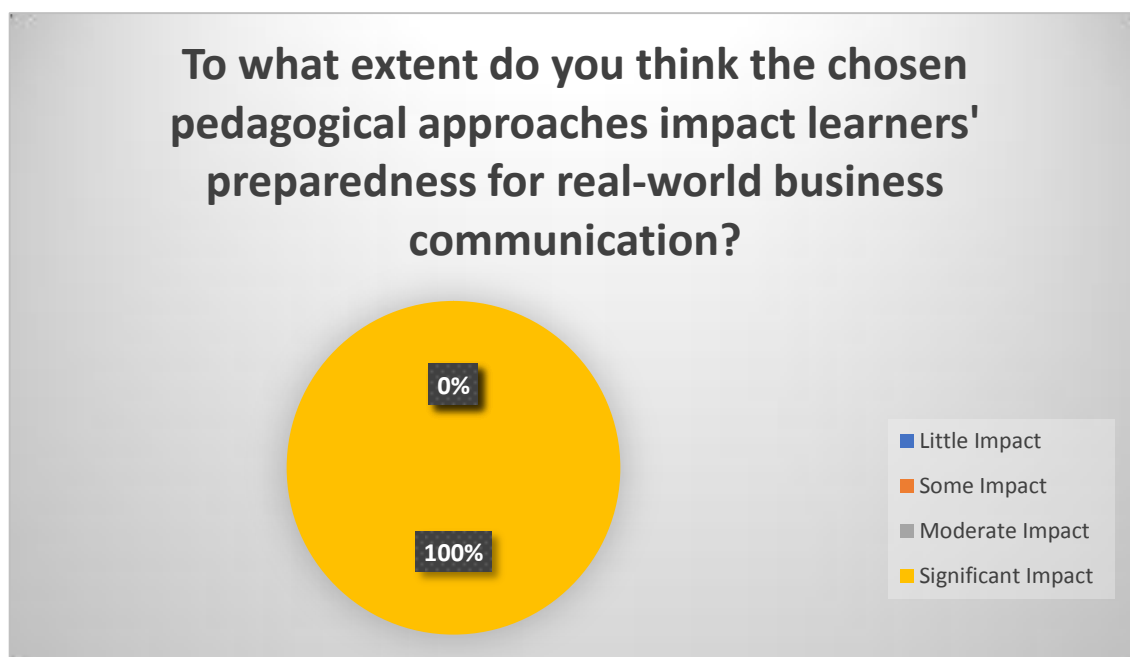


Figure 10. Approach Adoption Impacts on the Learners' Future Business Encounters

The total majority of the teachers, 100%, expressed that the teacher's choice of pedagogical

approaches is of a significant impact on the learners' readiness for real authentic business encounters. Meaning, the teachers are aware of the importance their choices play within the learning process.

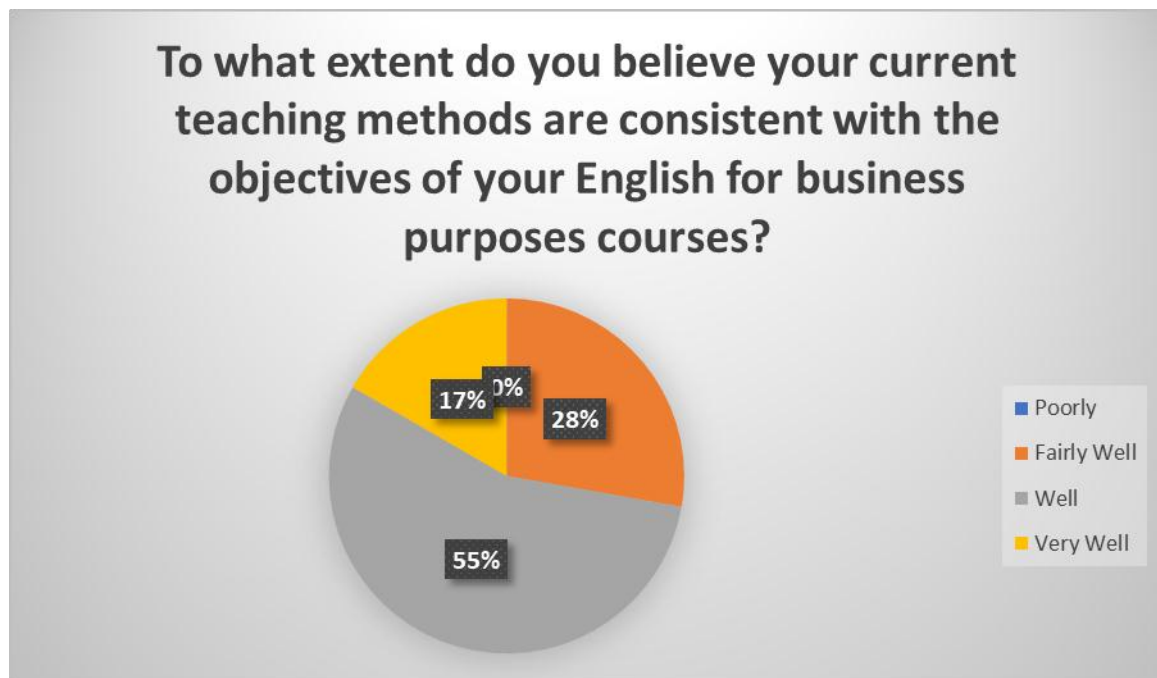


Figure 11. The Teachers Current Teaching Methods alignment with EBP Course Objectives

A 72% representation of the teachers questioned asserted that their current pedagogical approaches work in harmony with the stated goals of their EBP course. However, 28 % of them do not feel as confident as their other ESP colleagues expressed.

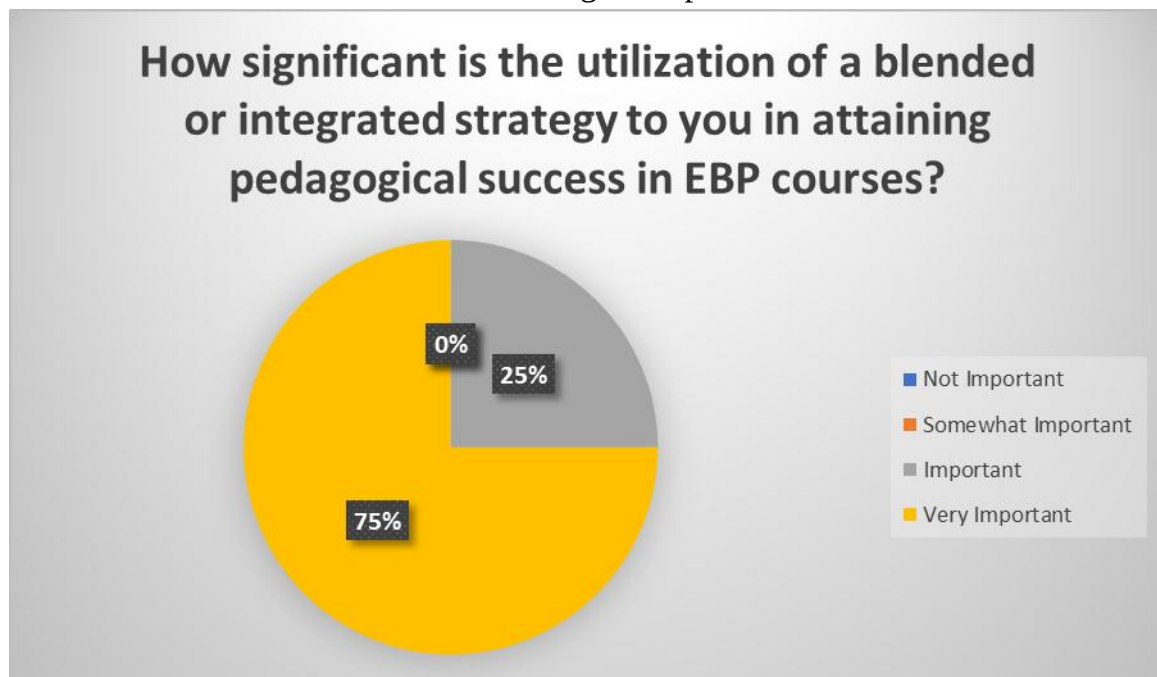


Figure 12. Blended Approach Utility to EBP Course Success

A decent proportion of the teachers, 75%, considered using a blended integrated approach in ESP course design and teaching as very necessary. Also, the remaining 25% found it of importance to not have one functioning approach for the subject matter. Nearly all teachers

believe that mixing different teaching methods is crucial for success in EBP courses. They recognize that combining approaches allows them to better address the varying needs of their students.

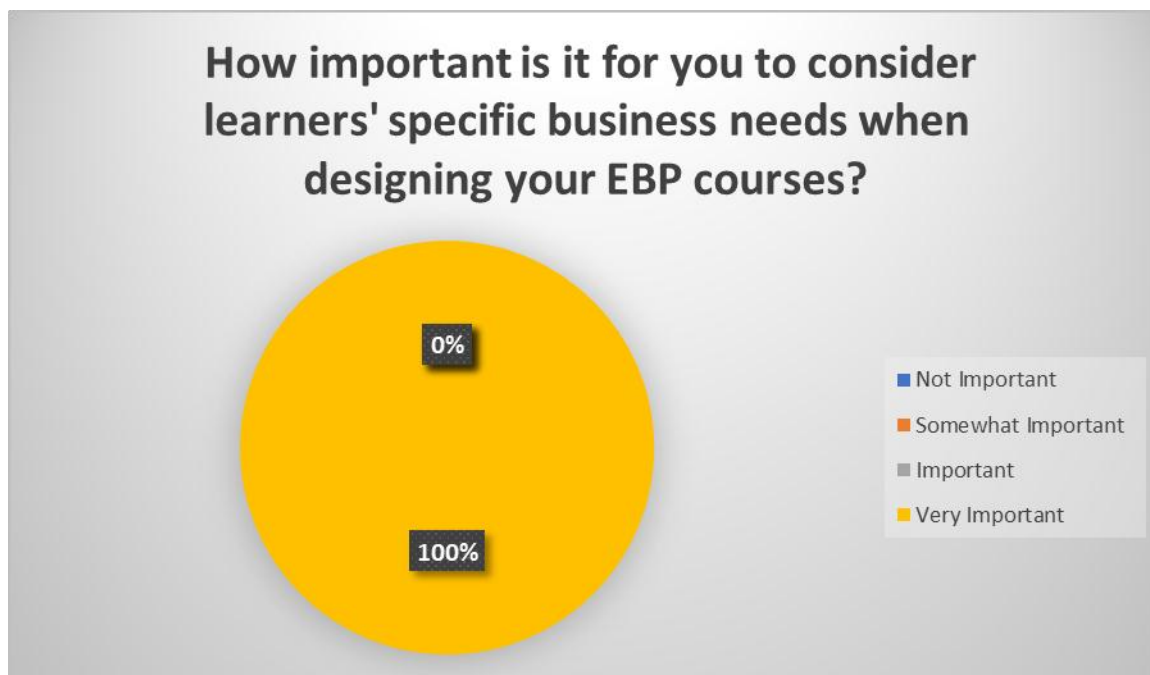


Figure 13. Learner Business Needs Relevance to EBP Course Design

The total majority of the participants, 100 %, acknowledged that taking into close account the needs of the learners in an EBP course design is of paramount relevance. This response highlights a key principle in ESP; the centrality of tailoring instruction to the specific contexts and requirements of the learners' professional environments.

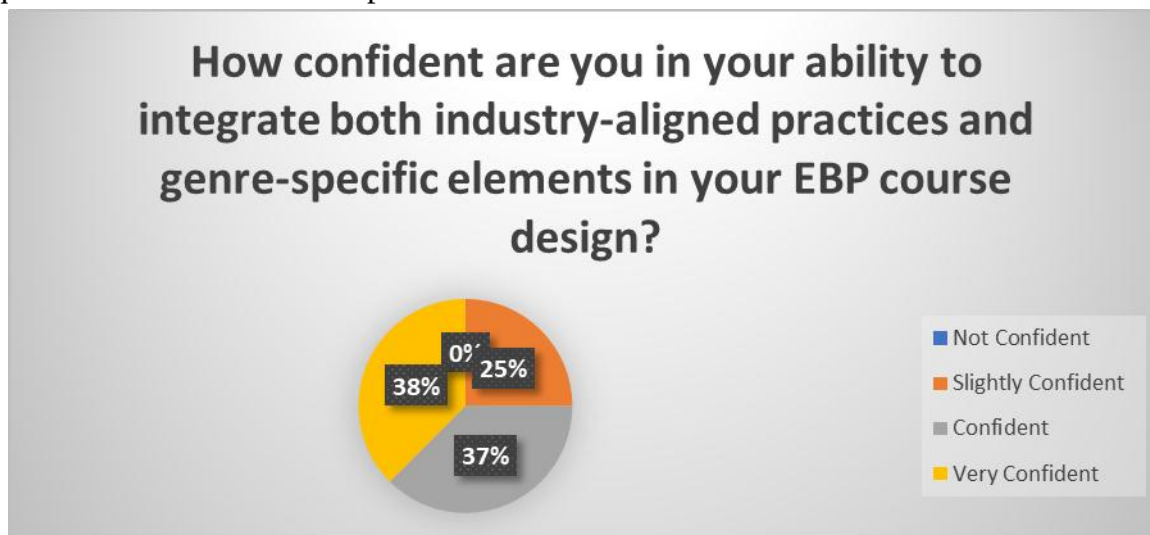


Figure 14. The Teachers' Confidence in Integrating Business Requirements with Genre-specific Elements

76 % (38+38) of the ESP teachers questioned stated that they felt rather confident in their ability to integrate the target business requirements along with genre-specific elements into their EBP course design. Yet, 25% of the whole teacher representation still experienced lack of confidence concerning the matter.

4.2 Interpretation

Several interpretations might be suggested with regard to the data gathered from the responses and comments of the teachers.

Initially, ESP teachers are selecting methodologies most suitable for their students' requirements and the objectives of the course. The inclination towards genre-based and task-based approaches signifies an emphasis on the pragmatic use in real-life situations; a feature that is crucial for preparing students for prospective business environments.

Moreover, the respondents are likely driven by the need to prepare students for immediate application in the business world. In other terms, educators see a direct link between the effectiveness of their teaching and its applicability in the business context.

In addition, although genre-based education is highly regarded for its effectiveness in teaching particular types of business communication such as reports and emails, the difficulties encountered by ESP teachers during implementation indicate a requirement for additional resources or training. Teachers may have difficulties in achieving a balance between genre education and larger language abilities as well as in altering genres to accommodate varying levels of student competence.

Furthermore, the expressed flexibility in adjusting course contents is a strong indicator that teachers are committed to providing relevant education. It also suggests that they recognize the value in being responsive to changes in the business environment.

Tackling another aspect, there seems for the teachers to enjoy rather a positive view regarding the relevance of genre in meeting the actual needs of the learners. This shows that genre-based instruction is more than only a theoretical concept; it is a strategy teachers conceive as practically beneficial. Nonetheless, given the challenges mentioned earlier, it also suggests that when conducted right, genre-based teaching has the potential to make a real difference in how well students learn.

Finally, regarding the cognitive aspect, the majority of teachers displayed reasonable but different levels of confidence in their capacity to include industry-aligned practices and genre-specific aspects into their EBP course design. Therefore, indicating a high degree of expertise and readiness among them. However, these varying degrees of confidence indicate a deficiency in professional growth which implies that continuous learning opportunities could assist in sustaining and enhancing this confidence.

5. Recommendations

In light of the findings obtained from this study, the researcher puts forwards the following recommendations.

Initially, it is of great necessity to conduct other research attempts tackling the topic from the other related aspects and with other agencies of interest such of the learners. Besides, the active ESP teaching community ought to expand professional development programs. This entails ongoing training opportunities to help maintain effective instructional practices and also support the teachers' confidence in themselves since it can help them be more competent in the multidisciplinary areas related to ESP pedagogy. Moreover, it is highly advisable to create and disseminate a repository of high-quality genre-specific teaching materials, case studies, and industry-aligned resources that the teachers can easily access and adapt to their courses as part of

a collaborative shared teaching mission. Another piece of recommendations that is of relevance is to conduct regular course reviews and updates in a way that permits for the teachers to contextualize the contents and methods to address efficiently both of the learners' needs and the target business environment requirements.

6. Limitations

Similar to any other study, this current research was challenged by a number of limitations. The first limitation to account for was the small sample size of eight (08) teachers which might limit the generalizability of the findings. Yet, given the scarcity of ESP teachers, let alone EBP ones, the results obtained still serve as a guideline for other future endeavors. Another major obstacle this research was confronted with was the potential respondent bias; something the researcher was well-aware of and sought to eliminate through the explanatory open-ended option with every item of the data collection tool applied. The third and final limitation to report was concerned with the limited scope of questions; that is, the questionnaire itself. It addressed the topic in relation with two main aspects, pedagogical approaches and genre elements integration. This does not capture the wider scope of other factors impacting the design of EBP courses such as professional teacher development and the learners feedback. However, those aspects were highlighted through the recommendations section.

7. CONCLUSION

The present study sought to primarily explore Algerian ESP teachers' approach preference to design English for business purposes courses. It did so with attached emphasis on how the practical applicability of genre-based instruction in real-world corporate environments is driving ESP teachers towards them more and more. The findings of this research showcase a tendency for a blended approach to EBP course design and implementation that is featured with a dedication to match instructional strategies with the immediate requirements of the learners. Nevertheless, difficulties involve balancing genre-specific elements with more general language skills and material adaptation for different student competences highlight the necessity of further resources and professional growth. Notwithstanding these difficulties, teachers' adaptability and favorable opinions of genre-based learning point to the possibility of greatly enhancing student learning results with proper application. The study also indicates that maintaining instructors' confidence and skill depends on constant professional development.

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