

**Material Development:
A Key Component to ESP Course Design,
A Case Study of English Teachers at Relizane University**

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Abstract

Designing successful ESP courses requires a crucial focus on developing course materials. It is necessary for ESP course designers to produce their own materials either through selection, adaptation or creation. These are considered three principal approaches through which teachers and syllabus designers develop and prepare instructional resources in language education. Together, these essential types of material design shape the value of teaching resources and help ESP teachers ensure that materials are appropriate, relevant and purposeful. Thus, the current study aims to emphasize how ESP teachers develop their instructional resources to deliver efficient ESP courses and demonstrate the key principles, strategies, and especially the features of material design. The present study employs a mixed-methods research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods through a questionnaire survey to investigate how ESP teachers at the University of Relizane design their teaching materials. The study was conducted in the Department of English during the academic year 2024-2025 and targeted approximately 50 current and former ESP teachers. This mixed-methods approach ensures a balanced analysis of quantitative trends and qualitative perspectives, offering a clearer picture of how ESP teachers at the University of Relizane approach material design. The findings of the research showed that a few ESP instructors opt for using ready-made resources, while most opt to adapt them and a small minority creates their own. At the end of this inquiry, a number of recommendations were put forward to support material growth and empower ESP instructors to actively work on enhancing their skills in material research and development.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes; Material Adaptation; Material Creation; Material Design; Selection.

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Introduction

One of the most important responsibilities of an ESP instructor is developing materials. Since it is difficult to select, adapt, or sometimes create materials, most ESP teachers struggle to find suitable resources, which are frequently out of their reach. Even when they do, materials do not fulfill the needs of the students for language learning or the goals of the courses as intended. Due to this, the majority of them across several Algerian faculties and departments feel free to teach anything they think is pertinent to their learners without interference or oversight from the university's official administrative or pedagogical authority. Thus, the role of teaching materials in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction is so essential to achieve successful learning. Instructors regard materials very important for structuring lessons, enhancing student engagement, and realizing learning objectives. Most EFL teachers and ESP ones, in particular, frequently face challenges in the use of convenient teaching materials that align with their students' needs, pedagogical requirements, and course objectives. Although published materials help instructors with providing structured content, they may not always be appropriate for specific classroom contexts. Therefore, teachers have to decide whether to use existing materials as they are, without any change or modification, adapt them to fit their teaching goals, or create entirely new resources.

Accordingly, the present study aims at exploring how ESP teachers at the University of Relizane develop their teaching materials. Precisely, the research investigates whether teachers prefer selecting existing materials, adapting them, or creating their own. Additionally, this work seeks to reveal the factors influencing these choices and expose the challenges teachers encounter in material design. The study also sheds light on the extent to which ESP teachers select, adapt, or create materials and the reasons behind their choices. This will lead to provide insights into the strengths and limitations of each approach and offer recommendations for guiding teachers in material design. On the whole, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do ESP teachers use pre-existing instructional materials?
2. How frequently do these teachers adapt materials, and why?
3. What factors motivate teachers to create their own instructional materials instead of using existing ones?
4. What obstacles do course instructors face in developing teaching materials?

Considering the above research questions, the study puts forward the following hypotheses:

1. Most ESP teachers select pre-existing materials due to time constraints and institutional guidelines.
2. ESP Teachers frequently adapt pre-existing materials to align content with learners' proficiency levels and learning needs.
3. Teachers resort to create their own instructional materials when existing resources fail to meet learners' needs and achieve course objectives.
4. When developing teaching materials, instructors face challenges such as time constraints, lack of relevant resources, inadequate training and institutional requirements.

1. Literature Review

Developing instructional materials plays a major role in effective English language teaching (ELT). The quality of students' learning opportunities is tremendously affected by decisions made by teachers whether to select from existing materials, adapt them to specific learning contexts, or create new materials (Tomlinson, 2013). For ESP learners, designing materials can reflect positively on linking between general language proficiency with specific fields of discourse such as: medicine, economy, or engineering (Basturkmen, 2010). The increase in interest in material design gave birth to a specialized field that gathered pedagogy, applied linguistics and practical resource design (Harwood, 2010). The present review sheds light on the three main processes of material design: selecting existing resources, adapting them, and creating new ones. In addition to the main processes, the review also introduces a brief overview of the major materials design models that guide teachers and ESP course designers in planning, producing, and evaluating instructional materials systematically and pedagogically.

1.2 Materials Development Definition

One definition of materials development is “anything which can be used to facilitate the learning of a language” (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 2). This can be achieved if materials are regarded as “a vehicle for learning” and not an end in themselves (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). For them, effective materials should reflect three dimensions: the language content, the learning process, and the context of use. In other words, for teaching materials to be truly effective, they must teach the right language, employ engaging pedagogical strategies, and use content that connects with the students' world. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), an ESP instructor should take into account a number of guidelines when creating his own resources. He must, first choose resources that inspire students and encourage learning. Choosing engaging texts and subjects, creating entertaining tasks and activities, and letting students apply their prior knowledge and abilities to the course material are a few examples. So as to be precise and methodical, the materials model should also be adaptable to foster innovation and diversity. Third, the expectations and viewpoints of the teachers on the learning process must be reflected in the resources. Fourth, the materials used should both convey the task's apparent manageability and its inherent complexity. Finally, in order to prevent repetition and student dissatisfaction, materials should introduce teachers to new methods. Similarly, Richards (2001) highlights the importance of authenticity, communicative purpose, and the balance between skills. The aforementioned principles are fundamental to the three materials design processes examined here; selection, adaptation, and creation. These processes represent a continuum, ranging from high reliance on pre-existing published materials to significant engagement with locally generated content.

On the ground, materials development generally starts with the selection of a coursebook, owing to the global dominance of textbooks as an instructional medium. (Harwood, 2010). However, teachers do not frequently use these materials without modification: they adapt them to better fit the needs, levels, and cultural realities of their learners (McGrath, 2016). In the ESP context, developing materials often requires the creation of novel textbooks because the selected ones frequently fail to address the specific linguistic requirements of specific fields (Basturkmen, 2010).

1.3. Material Selection

Selecting materials generally represents the primary and most frequent stage of the materials development process. For Richards (2001) textbooks dominate language instruction all over the world, because they minimize teacher preparation time and guarantee comprehensive coverage of syllabus requirements. For many foreign language learners, textbooks are considered their main source of learning English, making the selection process the most consequential pedagogical decision. In fact, selecting coursebooks is the process of matching the resource with the course objectives and the learners' needs. (Cunningsworth, 1995) Consequently, selection reflects the combination between sociocultural contexts, teaching philosophies and the institutional priorities. For Hutchinson and Waters (1987) text book selection is tightly connected with material evaluation, as they distinguish between two types of material evaluation: objective evaluation and subjective evaluation. The former focuses on what the material explicitly states it contains (stated content or syllabus). The latter assesses how effectively the material meets specific local needs (practical suitability). On the basis of Hutchinson and Waters' work, Ellis (1997) suggests a model of material evaluation based on three stages such as: pre-use evaluation, in-use evaluation and post-use evaluation. The first stage evaluates the material's potential suitability before it is implemented. The second stage observes and records how effectively the materials function during actual classroom use. The third stage measures the actual learning outcomes achieved after the materials have been completed.

Building on these evaluative frameworks, the criteria for selecting materials generally focus on five key areas:

1. **Relevance to Learner Needs:** The material must align with the students' goals and context.
2. **Level and Accessibility:** The content and language must be appropriate for the learners' proficiency level and easy for them to use.

3. **Balance of Skills and Content:** The material should offer an effective integration and balance between developing language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and covering the necessary subject matter.
4. **Cultural Appropriacy:** The material should be sensitive to and suitable for the learners' cultural context.
5. **Teacher Usability:** The material must be practical, clear, and manageable for the teacher to implement effectively in the classroom.

1.4. Material Adaptation

Most teachers resort to Text book adaptation to make teaching material suitable for their local classrooms' specific needs. By adapting teaching resources, teachers ensure the material is comprehensible, engaging, and culturally appropriate, making the learning input effective and relevant for the learners. This makes adaptation “inevitable and necessary process” McGrath (2013). According to Maley (2011) there are two types of adaptation ; reactive and proactive adaptation. In the first type, teachers make immediate adjustments to activities while in the second type, they redesign materials before use.

With regard to adaptation frameworks, McDonough and Shaw (2003) identify six techniques for adapting teaching materials: adding new content, deleting existing parts, modifying them for slight alterations, simplifying content to make it easier, reordering the sequence of activities or units, and replacing inappropriate material with a more suitable alternative. In the same context Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004) argue that teachers should add authentic, real-world materials to textbooks. They strongly believe that published books often lack enough genuine content to enhance students to communicate.

In English for Specific Purposes, adaptation generally means replacing general examples with tasks focused on the students' actual domain. For example, instead of using a random business context, a teacher would replace it with a case study from their specialism. There are several reasons behind adaptation in ESP. First, for linguistic appropriacy, through which teachers simplify content, adjust, or add tasks to provide accessibility (Nation & Macalister, 2010). Second, to ensure cultural relevance, teachers are required to adapt textbooks that contain cultural values or beliefs unfamiliar or inappropriate for learners. Third, some teachers resort to adaptation so as to modify tasks to better fit their instructional approach. Fourth, Using real-world or relevant materials can make students more interested and engaged in learning. (Tomlinson, 2013). Finally, Basturkmen (2010) argues that in an ESP context, adapting teaching materials can better match the specialized language and communication that learners need for their jobs or fields. On the whole, adaptation in ESP means more than just making materials easier or modifying content. It's about matching learning tasks to the actual work practices of a specific job or field. This makes the process not only more challenging, but also much more effective because it enables students to use the appropriate language needed in their careers. Adaptation, in brief, serves as a bridge, linking the process of selecting existing materials with the process of creating entirely new ones.

1.5 Material Creation

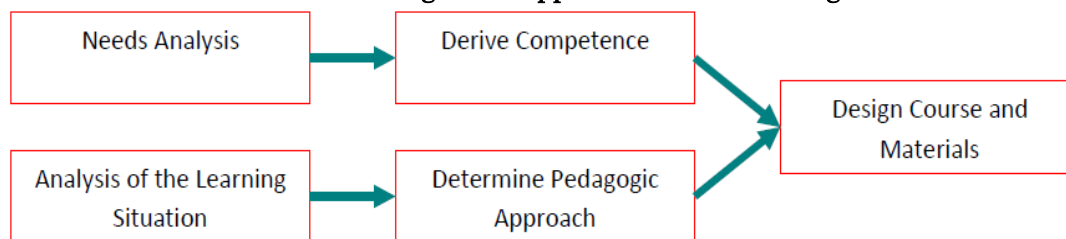
One of the hardest tasks for an ESP instructor is material creation, where teachers have to customize their materials to fit the needs of their students and the predetermined course objectives. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), an ESP instructor should take into account a number of guidelines when creating his own resources. He must, first choose resources that inspire students and encourage learning. Thus, choosing engaging texts and subjects, creating entertaining tasks and activities, and letting students apply their prior knowledge and abilities to the course material are a few examples. In addition to being precise and methodical, the materials model should also be adaptable to foster innovation and diversity. Third, the expectations and viewpoints of the teachers on the learning process must be reflected in the resources. Fourth, the materials used should both convey the task's apparent manageability and its inherent complexity. Finally, in order to prevent repetition and student dissatisfaction, materials should introduce teachers to new methods.

With regard to principles of effective material creation, scholars widely emphasize that materials should be based on established principles of Foreign Language Learning (FLL) and pedagogy. Building upon this foundation, Tomlinson (2013) identifies several core principles. The most important one is that learners should be exposed to a rich input which stimulates emotional and cognitive involvement to ensure motivation. Another key principle is that activities should encourage learners to notice language features and discover patterns instead of receiving explanations. Additionally, materials must reflect how language is used in real-life situations to help students practice the language appropriately outside the classroom: this is authenticity. Finally, language items should reappear in varied contexts to ensure recycling and reinforcement for stronger learning consolidation. Nation and Macalister (2010) also argue that effective materials require a balance between the four strands of language learning: meaning-focused input and output, language-focused instruction, and fluency practice.

1.6 Material Design Model

Designing materials is crucially linked to learners' needs which are considered the basis for evaluating the existence level of their competence in the target situation. (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). This is, therefore, the stage where course designers have a complete image of their learners' lacks and expectations. When analyzing the learning situation, teachers would be provided with the necessary knowledge about the surroundings where the materials will be introduced. This is called the pedagogic approach. The combination between this approach, the learners' needs and the learning environment would contribute effectively in selecting the appropriate materials and the content of the course. The figure below clearly demonstrates the interconnectedness of the aforementioned factors.

Figure 1: Approach to Course Design

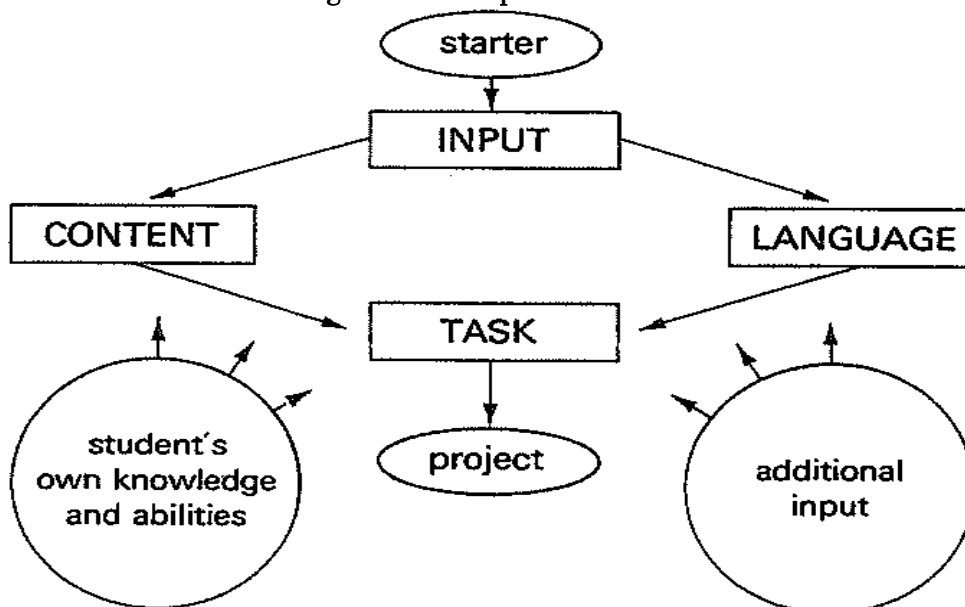


(Hutchinson and Waters, 1987)

The model presented by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) contains the following elements :

- a)- Input: It can be a text, dialogue, video recording, diagram,...etc.
- b)- Content focus: Language is used to inform or express feeling about a situation. Non-verbal content should be exploited to communicate inside the classroom.
- c)- Language focus: It is the language knowledge provided for learners before designing communicative.
- d)-Task: Learners are required to use the content they have been provided with the language knowledge they have to fulfil communicative tasks.

Figure 2: An Expanded Materials Model



Source: (Adapted from Hutchinson and Waters' model of Material Design, 1987)

When it comes to designing authentic teaching materials, ESP teachers have a wide range of options. Books, articles, scientific magazines and some official web sites on the net can help teachers develop their teaching materials effeciently. What matters most is to collaborate with content teachers and learners to evaluate the efficacy of these materials and put them into use. On the whole, when developing appropriate materials, an ESP course designer has to take into consideration some principles, such as whether they motivate learners and stimulate learning, serve the course objectives, and identify the students' needs easily and efficiently. For this reason, Brown (1995) recommends preparing a checklist of convenient materials to ensure successful material evaluation.

2. Research Methodology

The present study relies on a quantitative and qualitative research approach through a questionnaire survey to explore how EFL teachers at the University of Relizane design their teaching materials. The main objective is to seek whether ESP teachers select pre-existing materials, adapt them to meet their students' needs, or create their own. The investigation took place in the Department of English at Relizane University during the academic year 2024-2025 and targeted approximately 50 ESP teachers. Due to the limited number of current ESP teachers, the questionnaire survey also included former ESP teachers who had previously taught at Relizane University in recent years. Most participants are full-time teachers holding a PhD degree, while smaller proportions are part-time teachers with a master's degree. The data was gathered through distributing a structured questionnaire to the selected participants. The questionnaire is composed of both closed-ended and open-ended questions, which allow for understanding teachers' material design preferences. First, the closed-ended questions provide responses categorized into clear patterns through statistics. Second, the open-ended questions help to get deeper insights into teachers' challenges, motivations, and strategies in selecting, adapting, or creating their teaching resources. This mixed-methods approach offers a clear image of how ESP instructors at Relizane University approach material design.

The questionnaire is introduced with background information about the participants such as: their qualifications, teaching experience, and professional status (part-time or full-time teachers).

The second section of the questionnaire is devoted to the main theme of the study; exploring teachers' preferences and practices in developing instructional resources when designing their ESP courses. It contains both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions reflect the participants' attitudes toward material design, such as: whether they select, adapt or create their own materials. The open-ended questions aim to invite respondents to elaborate on their choices, share specific examples, and reflect on the challenges behind their material development practices.

2.1. Analysis and Interpretation of the Questionnaire Results

To gain clear insight into teachers' preferences for material design, their practices, and the major challenges they face when designing their ESP courses, data from a structured questionnaire was gathered and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings were interpreted under three main sections: participants' profiles, instructional material usage approaches, and qualitative insights into teaching material development.

2.1.1. Participant Demographics

Fifty (50) ESP teachers answered the questionnaire. The table below outlines the various types of participants who took part in the questionnaire survey.

Table 1 : Participant Demographic Overview

Number of participants	Degree	Frequency
30	PHd	60%
15	Master's degree	30%
05	Magister degree	10%

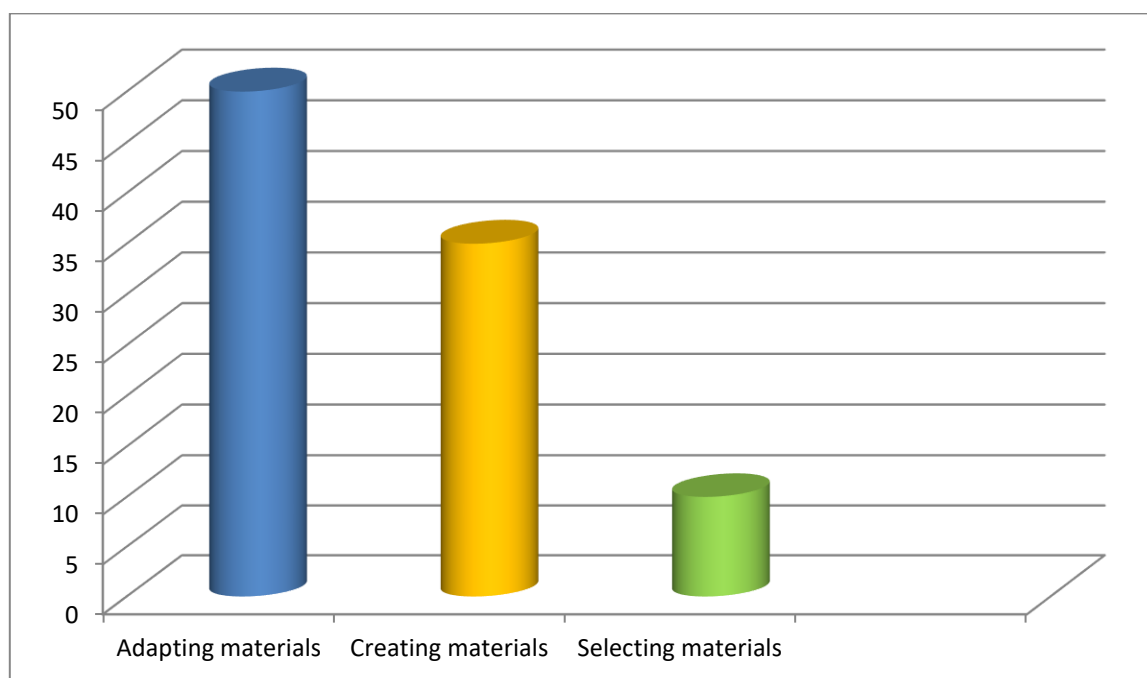
The results show the teachers' advanced degrees (30 PHd) which suggests they are highly qualified, making their insights more credible. In addition, regarding employment status 35 participants were full-time teachers, while 15 were part-time. This also indicates the study includes experiences from both permanent staff and professionals.

In terms of teaching experience, 35 teachers reported having more than ten years of teaching experience, indicating a strong representation of expert educators. Only ten (10) participants had between 1 to 3 years of experience, while only 5 teachers had between 7 and 10 years of experience.

2.1.2. Approaches to the Use of Teaching Materials

A key question in the questionnaire concerned how the teachers at Relizane University use teaching materials, specifically whether they select from existing resources, adapt materials, or create their own. The results show that all the respondents in the questionnaire (50) reported adapting published materials, and thirty five (35) representing 70% said they create their own. Only ten participants reported using existing materials without any modification. This suggests that the majority of teachers at Relizane University actively customize existing resources to better suit the needs of their learners and serve the learning objectives of their courses. However, it should be noted that five (05) teachers reported that they both create their own materials and adapt existing ones. However, only two (02) respondents indicated that they select, adapt and create their own materials. The figure below clearly illustrates the teaching materials used by the participants at Relizane University.

Figure 2: Material Use Practices by teachers at Relizane University



2.1.3. Reasons for Using Existing Materials

The findings show that only ten (10) respondents opted for selecting published materials when designing their ESP courses. This was for two main reasons: first, because the materials are already structured and save time, and second, because they align well with the curriculum. The low number of respondents opting for this type of material reflects the limitations of using pre-existing resources. Algerian ESP instructors believe that existing materials do not always meet their learners' needs or serve their courses' objectives.

2.1.4. Why Content Adaptation

With regard to the second approach to material design, the results of the questionnaire survey reveal that all respondents employed adaptation as the most common material development strategy. The table below illustrates how the content can be modified, based on the responses from participants:

Table 2 : Students' Perceptions on Modifying Content

Methods of Content Modification	Number of participants	Frequency
Simplifying or expanding content	50	100%
Adjusting for different proficiency levels	30	60%
Incorporating interactive elements	20	40%
Adding cultural or contextual relevance	25	50%

The figures in the above table stress the necessity of adapting materials to meet the learners' needs in terms of language and culture. It should be noted that some respondents opted for more than one method, and one participant cited something very important when expressing the desire to ensure materials remain relevant and current

A. Reasons for Creating Materials

The responses of the respondents who opted for creating their own materials are presented in the table below:

Table 3: Reasons for Creating Materials

Why creating materials	Number of teachers	Frequency
The need for engaging and interactive content	35	70 %
The necessity to meet specific student needs	30	60%
The lack of suitable existing materials	20	40%
The importance of local or cultural relevance	15	30%

As mentioned in the above table, the most motivating factor for creating teaching materials is the need to incorporate interactive content. This explains why many teachers believe that relying on pre-existing resources cannot foster student engagement and active participation. Additionally, 60% of respondents considered the necessity to address specific students' needs as the second reason for material creation. This reflects the teachers' belief that ready-made materials may not always meet the learners' proficiency levels and the courses' learning objectives, which is why instructors feel the necessity to design more convenient and tailored materials. However, 40% of participants regarded the lack of suitable existing materials as a challenge, and only 15 teachers out of the participants representing about 30% stressed the importance of local or cultural relevance when designing materials. This undoubtedly explains the teachers' awareness of cultural sensitivity and the need to integrate students' cultural backgrounds into their courses. Overall, the results confirm that material creation is not just a matter of personal preference, but rather a pedagogical necessity influenced by student engagement, the need for contextual modifications, and the limitations of existing materials.

2.1.5 Qualitative Analysis of Practices, Challenges, and Recommendations

The following section is devoted to the qualitative analysis of the data obtained from the teachers' questionnaire.

2.1.5.1 Adapting Materials

The last part of the questionnaire survey was designed to invite respondents to discuss the challenges of their material development practices and raise some recommendations for better material utilization. This was achieved through several open-ended responses which reveal a wide number of interesting examples of adapting materials in practice. Teachers replied that they often adjust listening and reading materials to simplify difficult vocabulary items, replace inappropriate content, align it with current teaching methods or incorporating appropriate ESP terminology for specialized students. In this respect, one participant stated:

"I was unable to find relevant materials, so I chose to create my own. While this ensures that the materials are suitable for students' levels and needs, creating them from scratch can be very time- and energy-consuming. This process also demands a high degree of creativity to design content that is not only effective but also engaging and motivating for students".

Additionally, other participants in the survey affirmed modifying texts that contain sensitive themes to respect students' cultural beliefs and customs. For instance, one respondent replied:

"Once I had to change the text because it did not align with our customs, beliefs, and traditions. The text was about a woman singer who was a drug addict. Moreover, even the provided picture was not appropriate. In another situation, I had to shorten the text because it was too long and contained difficult vocabulary."

2.1.5.2 Challenges in Creating Materials

The most common point among all participants was their agreement that creating original teaching materials is a time-consuming and demanding process. . They also pointed out several challenges they face in the process, which are as follows: First, a lack of time and institutional support emerged as a significant hurdle. Furthermore, teachers pointed to limited technological resources, such as printers and projectors, which further complicates the process. Another challenge they face is the absence of sufficient collaborative networks or feedback channels. In addition, the process demands a high degree of creativity and pedagogical expertise. Finally, participants mentioned cultural issues that arise when using authentic foreign content.

2.1.5.3 Advantages and Disadvantages

All participants agreed there should be a balance between the time spent and the pedagogical effectiveness of teaching materials. Selecting materials is a time-efficient option, though they are often misaligned with students' specific needs. In contrast, adapting existing materials provides greater flexibility and relevance, but this process requires significant effort. Creating original materials allows for complete customization and can significantly boost student engagement, although this approach is highly demanding of time, creativity, and technical skills. As a result, this led to a disagreement among participants: Some believed that creating their own materials showed they were professional and dedicated, while others worried about the risk of feeling exhausted and inefficient, especially when proper institutional support is lacking.

2.1.5.4 Influencing Factors

Teachers' material choices are guided by a comprehensive understanding of teaching, where materials must align with both academic outcomes and learner realities. For instance, teachers first consider the student proficiency level and learning styles of their students. Additionally, they ensure the materials have cultural and contextual relevance to resonate with the learners. Furthermore, materials are selected based on curriculum alignment and learning objectives, guaranteeing that they contribute to the desired academic outcomes. Moreover, practical considerations like time availability and resource accessibility are taken into account. Finally, teachers also consider the specific skill focus of the lesson, such as reading, writing, or speaking, when choosing materials.

2.1.5.5 Recommendations for Improvement

In this survey, teachers suggested several forward-thinking strategies to improve material design. They proposed creating online platforms for sharing and evaluating teaching materials. In addition, they recommended relying on AI tools to ensure better time management and convenient learning content. Another suggestion was to organize workshops and study days to train novice teachers on how to design materials. Furthermore, they emphasized the need to integrate real-life materials and successful learning models into ESP course design. It was also noted that they have to develop materials in relation to local culture and national values in their courses. A remarkable suggestion was the implementation of the LARA framework—Leave, Adopt, Replace, Adapt—to help course designers with efficient material evaluation.

Conclusion

The results of this study clearly demonstrate that ESP teachers at the University of Relizane can be characterized as proactive and reflective practitioners who engage critically with their teaching materials rather than relying passively on commercially available resources. The majority of participants reported adapting existing materials or designing their own in order to better align with learners' disciplinary needs, language proficiency levels, and professional objectives. This practice reflects a strong awareness of the contextual and situated nature of ESP instruction, where relevance and authenticity are essential for effective learning.

Despite this pedagogical commitment, teachers' creativity and innovation are frequently constrained by several structural and institutional challenges. Time limitations, insufficient access to up-to-date resources, and the absence of systematic institutional support were identified as major obstacles that hinder sustained material development. These constraints often force teachers to balance innovation with practicality, limiting the full realization of their pedagogical potential.

To address these challenges, the study highlights the importance of establishing collaborative platforms that facilitate material sharing and peer exchange, alongside targeted professional development opportunities focusing on ESP material design. Moreover, enhanced administrative support is essential to legitimize and sustain these practices. Such measures would not only improve the quality and contextual relevance of teaching materials but also strengthen ESP teachers' roles as leaders of pedagogical innovation within the university.

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