

The challenges of designing an ESP course: Perceptions of EFL trainee teachers in the city of Buenos Aires

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Abstract

This research article presents findings from an exploratory study on the perceptions of 25 EFL trainee teachers in the city of Buenos Aires regarding the main difficulties they faced when designing their first English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course not centered around reading comprehension. Participant responses reveal several recurring challenges including the integration of ESP knowledge into general language teaching, the complexities surrounding curriculum development and needs assessment, the strategic alignment of tasks and assessments with learner objectives, considerations of diverse learning styles, and a balanced view on the role of basic language skills in ESP learning outcomes. These findings reinforce the need for ongoing professional development and institutional support to empower future ESP instructors to design effective ESP courses tailored to different professional and academic needs beyond reading comprehension.

Key words: ESP, course design, challenges, EFL trainee teachers, perceptions

Resumen

Este estudio exploratorio analiza las dificultades enfrentadas por 25 profesores en formación de inglés como lengua extranjera en la ciudad de Buenos Aires al diseñar cursos de Inglés para Propósitos Específicos (ESP) que no se centran en la lectocomprensión. Los participantes identificaron desafíos como integrar conocimiento especializado en la enseñanza general del inglés, desarrollar el currículum y evaluar necesidades, alinear tareas y evaluaciones con los objetivos de los estudiantes, adaptarse a diferentes estilos de aprendizaje, y evaluar el impacto de las habilidades lingüísticas básicas en el aprendizaje del ESP. Estos hallazgos subrayan la importancia de ofrecer desarrollo profesional continuo y apoyo institucional para capacitar a futuros profesores de ESP en el diseño de cursos adaptados a diversas necesidades profesionales y académicas, más allá de la lectocomprensión.

Palabras Claves: ESP, diseño de cursos, desafíos, profesores de inglés en formación, perspectivas

Introduction

The field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), according to Belmonte, Garay, and Martini (2015), has evolved significantly over the past fifty years. This evolution has been driven by a complex interplay of social, economic, and linguistic factors, leading to profound changes in both the objectives and methodologies employed. There has been a noticeable transition from a traditional focus on grammatical rules towards a more communicative

approach that prioritizes the explicit needs of learners. Consequently, there is a growing recognition of the importance of delivering high-quality ESP courses in Argentina.

However, in practice, designing and delivering relevant ESP courses tailored to working professionals remains a considerable challenge, as noted by Haj Sassi (2015), especially since many teacher-training programs in Buenos Aires predominantly equip future educators to develop ESP courses centered on improving reading comprehension skills. This narrow focus often leaves trainee teachers ill-prepared to effectively plan and design courses that address the diverse linguistic and professional requirements of students across various professional and academic domains. Thus, developing ESP courses that are both pedagogically sound and contextually relevant proves to be a daunting task for many educators in the region.

Understanding the challenges faced by trainee teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the design of ESP courses targeted at various needs is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it sheds light on the practical realities and complexities of implementing ESP pedagogy in diverse educational contexts. Secondly, it offers insights into the gaps between theoretical knowledge and practical application in teacher training programs. Thirdly, it provides opportunities for enhancing the professional development of EFL trainee teachers by addressing their specific needs and concerns in ESP course design.

Through an in-depth exploration of EFL trainee teacher perceptions in the city of Buenos Aires, this study seeks to identify common challenges encountered during the ESP course design process as well as to propose strategies for addressing them. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this study also attempts to contribute to the ongoing discourse on ESP pedagogy and teacher education, ultimately aiming to improve the quality of ESP instruction in Argentina to meet the evolving language needs of learners in specialized contexts. Specifically, the following research question will be addressed: What are the perceptions of EFL trainee teachers in the city of Buenos Aires regarding the primary challenges in designing ESP courses?

Literature Review

ESP has emerged as a specialized branch of language teaching aimed at equipping learners with the language skills necessary for their specific professional or academic contexts (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). As Ahmed (2014) points out, “ESP focuses on when, where and why learners need the language either in study or workplace contexts” (p. 5). Thus, decisions about what to teach, and sometimes how to teach, are informed by descriptions of how language is used in the particular contexts the learners will work or study in. As stated by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), much of the work done by ESP teachers is concerned with course design, “whereas course design plays a relatively minor part in the life of the General English teacher” (p. 21).

As stated by Basturkmen (2015), designing effective ESP courses entails being able to integrate relevant subject-specific content with language learning objectives, which requires a deep understanding of both the disciplinary content and language teaching principles. This is often a daunting task for EFL trainee teachers, who tend to find it challenging to select appropriate materials and activities that effectively bridge these two aspects without compromising on either (Mejri, 2024).

To better bridge these aspects, conducting a comprehensive needs analysis is crucial, as it informs the selection of content and language objectives tailored to learners’ specific

professional or academic contexts (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). However, accurately identifying these needs requires a deep understanding of the target learners' linguistic requirements, which can be complicated by factors such as diverse learner backgrounds and evolving industry demands (Basturkmen, 2015).

As Sukying et al. (2023) remind us, needs analysis is “the first stage in ESP course development, followed by curriculum design, selection of materials, methodology, assessment, and evaluation” (p. 397). These steps are not merely sequential but interconnected, forming a cyclical process where each phase informs and influences the others (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). For novice ESP teachers, comprehending this interdependence often requires a nuanced understanding of how each phase contributes to the overall effectiveness of an ESP course (Basturkmen, 2015). For instance, thorough needs analysis informs both the content to be taught and how it should be delivered and assessed to meet learners' specific language and professional needs. Without understanding this interconnectedness, trainee teachers may struggle to navigate ESP course development effectively.

Another central challenge in ESP course design is material selection and adaptation. As stated by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), ESP materials must be authentic, relevant, and engaging to facilitate meaningful language learning experiences in specialized domains. More often than not, novice ESP teachers encounter challenges in sourcing suitable materials that meet these criteria and align with the linguistic needs of their learners. Adapting existing materials to suit the specific context and proficiency levels of learners further adds to the complexity of this task (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Moreover, ESP courses intend to simulate authentic language use and promote communicative competence in real-world scenarios (Swales, 1990). However, designing tasks and activities that effectively integrate language skills with subject-specific content remains a significant challenge. As noted by Benesch (2001), it is often difficult for novice ESP instructors to create tasks that not only enhance language proficiency but also foster critical thinking and application of knowledge within the specialized context.

Assessing learners' progress and evaluating the effectiveness of ESP courses present additional challenges. Designing assessments that accurately measure learners' attainment of language and content objectives requires careful consideration of assessment criteria and methods (Basturkmen, 2015). Moreover, providing constructive feedback that supports learners' ongoing development in specialized language skills can be complex and requires expertise in both language assessment and content evaluation.

Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that ESP trainee teachers are primarily trained in General English (Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Strevens, 1988). When transitioning from General English to ESP teaching, they typically encounter a “difference of attitude” difficulty, between literature and science in particular (Robinson, 1991). As is the case with most EFL teachers, they tend to receive more training in literature rather than technical language. Consequently, EFL trainees commonly worry about their ability to effectively cope with the students' area of specialism.

Besides feeling they lack specialized knowledge, EFL trainees often fear the many responsibilities expected of ESP teachers. Among these, Basturkmen (2015) highlights the need to conduct a sound needs analysis, design their own syllabi, write and/or adapt course materials, and evaluate the course and the learners. Khuwaileh (1995) delves further into the complexities and difficulties faced by ESP teachers, highlighting time constraints and

inconvenient scheduling, heavy workload, and lack of technical expertise required to effectively teach subjects such as science or business within the ESP framework.

Moreover, adapting appropriate language materials poses a significant challenge for EFL trainee teachers involved in ESP course design. As pointed out by Mejri (2024), EFL trainees tend to encounter difficulties in locating suitable materials and modifying them to meet the specific linguistic and communicative needs of their learners (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Given these complexities, the process of material adaptation in ESP course design requires not only creativity and resourcefulness but also a deep understanding of both language teaching methodologies and the particularities of the ESP field in question.

Additionally, the role of language proficiency and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in ESP course design cannot be overlooked. EFL trainee teachers might face challenges in balancing their own language proficiency levels with the linguistic demands of the ESP curriculum, particularly when teaching in specialized domains with complex terminology and discourse conventions (Shulman, 1987). Moreover, developing a deep understanding of the subject matter and its linguistic features, as emphasized in PCK frameworks (Ball et al., 2008), presents a steep learning curve for EFL trainee teachers entering the field of ESP instruction.

Several international research studies have shed light on the challenges outlined above. Scholars such as Petraki and Khat (2022) and Ahyar and Sari (2018) have emphasized the difficulties in materials development and the need for appropriate training. Their work highlights the intricate balance required to tailor instructional materials that not only meet the linguistic needs of ESP learners but also address the specific technical content essential for their professional domains. Petraki and Khat have also specifically highlighted the prospective ESP teacher's lack of motivation and the "lack of human resources for compiling appropriate materials" (p. 10). In their words, "Developing teaching materials can be difficult in an EFL context, especially in contexts where such materials are scarce and there are insufficient financial resources to support teacher training" (p. 13).

Meanwhile, Helsvig (2012) and Alsharif and Shukri (2018) have delved into broader challenges affecting both learners and educators in ESP contexts. Helsvig has drawn attention to the deficiency in teachers' expertise within specialized fields, emphasizing the impact of inadequate subject knowledge on effective instruction. In like manner, Alsharif and Shukri have advocated for comprehensive professional training to complement academic qualifications, arguing that such training is pivotal in equipping teachers with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of ESP instruction.

A more recent study by Sukying et al. (2023) indicated a significant need for extensive training among Thai university teachers in ESP practice. Specifically, the participants identified several areas where training was deemed necessary: teaching materials (60.3%), course design (58.7%), needs analysis (58.7%), teaching methodology (57.1%), course evaluation (47.6%), and subject content (42.9%). Interestingly, training in the English language itself was reported as the least required (20.6%), suggesting that proficiency in English language skills among ESP university teachers is generally adequate. These results align with prior research indicating that while ESP teachers possess English teaching credentials, they often lack specialization in the specific disciplines they teach (Ahmed, 2014; Bojovic, 2006).

Despite the existing international literature on these issues, there have been no specific studies exploring these challenges within the context of Argentina. Consequently, this paper

aims to fill the gap in the literature while advocating for enhanced support and training for EFL trainee teachers in the city of Buenos Aires. By examining the unique circumstances and challenges faced by future ESP instructors in this particular context, this study also aims to provide valuable insights into how educators can be better prepared to design and deliver ESP courses that cater not only to basic reading comprehension but also to a broader spectrum of professional and academic needs.

Methods and participants

An online questionnaire including open and close-ended questions was randomly administered to 25 (20 female and 5 male) EFL trainee teachers from two different teacher training colleges in the city of Buenos Aires. Participating trainees had taken similar courses developed and delivered by the same instructor, both of which were aimed at designing effective ESP courses around a variety of subject areas in the context of Higher Education. In all cases, trainees were expected to design an ESP course of their choice targeting diverse student needs in a given professional or academic context, with a specific emphasis on aspects beyond reading comprehension.

The questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative and qualitative data on the participants' perceptions of the challenges of investigating specialist discourse and conducting a sound needs analysis, drafting measurable aims and objectives, selecting appropriate content and materials, designing effective authentic tasks, and planning a variety of evaluation instruments. Close-ended questions employed a five-point Likert scale format, prompting respondents to assess the difficulty levels they encountered at the different steps of the course design process—from "Extremely Challenging" to "Not Challenging". Additionally, participants were asked to reflect on their recent experiences designing their first ESP course, rating statements regarding their perceived accomplishments and challenges using responses ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree".

Open-ended questions complemented these ratings by eliciting deeper insights into participants' ideas and perceptions regarding the primary challenges encountered when designing an ESP course for the first time. These qualitative responses aimed to further explore the trainees' perspectives regarding the intricate challenges and specific difficulties involved in designing ESP courses.

Analysis and results

Prior experience teaching ESP

When asked about their prior experience teaching ESP before attending teacher training college, 80% of respondents indicated they had no prior experience, while 20% reported having some experience. Among those with prior ESP teaching experience, the majority (60%) had between 1 to 4 years of experience, while 20% had between 5 to 10 years or 11 to 15 years of experience. This suggests a varied level of prior exposure to ESP teaching among the participants.

Perceived challenges in ESP course design

The participants' perceptions of the most challenging stages in designing their first ESP course at teacher training college are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' perceptions of the most challenging stages of the ESP course design process (N=25 EFL trainee teachers in the city of Buenos Aires).

Stage of the ESP course design process (Adapted from Graves, 2000)	Extremely Challenging	Very Challenging	Challenging	Somewhat Challenging	Not Challenging
Investigating Specialist Discourse	20%	16%	36%	28%	0%
Needs Analysis	16%	32%	36%	16%	0%
Aims and Objectives	4%	12%	64%	16%	4%
Content Selection	8%	48%	36%	0%	8%
Teaching Methods	4%	20%	48%	20%	8%
Materials Selection	20%	44%	20%	12%	4%
Materials Design	24%	28%	32%	8%	8%
Task Design	4%	44%	32%	8%	12%
Evaluation and Assessment	8%	32%	36%	20%	4%

As indicated in Table 1, certain stages posed significant difficulties. Drafting aims and objectives was particularly challenging, with 64% finding it challenging and 4% deeming it extremely challenging. Similarly, investigating specialist discourse presented notable challenges, rated as extremely challenging by 20% and very challenging by 16% of participants.

Additionally, participants encountered significant challenges in choosing suitable content (48% found it challenging, 8% very challenging) and materials (44% challenging, 20% very challenging), crucial steps in tailoring courses to specific professional needs. Task design also emerged as challenging, with 44% participants rating it as such and 32% finding it very challenging, reflecting the complexity of creating tasks that effectively bridge theoretical knowledge with practical application.

Conversely, aspects like materials design and evaluation/assessment were perceived as less challenging. Materials design received moderate ratings (28% very challenging, 32% challenging), indicating a more manageable task once foundational steps were addressed. Evaluation and assessment, though still challenging for some (32% challenging, 36%

somewhat challenging), appeared less daunting overall, possibly due to clearer guidelines or prior training.

In response to a follow-up open-ended question, participants elaborated on specific challenges they encountered. For instance, difficulties in sourcing authentic materials, especially in specialized fields like nursing, prompted some participants to develop original materials. Others noted initial unfamiliarity with their subject area, highlighting a learning curve in understanding and integrating specialist discourse into their teaching approach.

Investigating specialist discourse was considered to be extremely challenging if there were no published books on the subject area (e.g., English for musicians). Other technical fields (medicine, business, legal English, etc.) were considered to be less challenging since there were available related materials on the Internet. These contrasts in accessibility underscored the varied experiences participants faced in their efforts to find suitable resources for effective teaching.

Reflections on course design

The participants' responses to statements about designing their first ESP course at teacher training college are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants' ratings of the given statements about their experience designing their first ESP course at teacher training college (N=25 EFL trainee teachers in the city of Buenos Aires).

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I was able to recognize the differences between EGP and ESP	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
I found it difficult to draft specific, attainable and measurable objectives	12%	36%	20%	32%	0%
I did not pay enough attention to the specialized content	0%	4%	16%	60%	20%
My students' needs were prior to mine before developing the curriculum	40%	44%	16%	0%	0%
I was able to incorporate my students' goals into the course content and activities	44%	52%	4%	0%	0%
I found it difficult to vary the types of resources used to match different learning styles	16%	36%	36%	12%	0%
I was able to include a variety of assessment tools (i.e., assignments, exams, projects, collaborative work,	8%	48%	28%	12%	4%

peer assessment)					
I designed an appropriate course evaluation instrument	16%	60%	20%	0%	4%
Basic English language skills were crucial to my students' successful ESP learning	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%

As shown in Table 2, the majority of participants indicated strong agreement (80%) in recognizing the distinctions between English for general purposes (EGP) and ESP, indicating a solid grasp of ESP principles. However, a significant portion found it difficult to draft specific, attainable, and measurable objectives (12% strongly agree, 36% agree) and struggled with varying resources to cater to diverse learning styles (16% strongly agree, 36% agree).

Regarding the incorporation of students' goals into course content and activities, a substantial number agreed (44%) or strongly agreed (52%), reflecting efforts to align curriculum design with student needs. In terms of assessment diversity, nearly half of the participants agreed (48%) or strongly agreed (8%) that they included a variety of assessment tools, though some found this challenging (12% disagree, 4% strongly disagree).

Furthermore, designing an appropriate course evaluation instrument was seen positively by a majority (60% agree, 16% strongly agree), suggesting competence in evaluating student progress effectively. Basic English language skills were deemed crucial for ESP learning success by a majority (60% agree, 20% strongly agree), underlining the foundational role of language proficiency in ESP contexts.

In response to a follow-up open-ended question, participants highlighted the distinction between EGP and ESP, emphasizing the necessity of integrating ESP principles into their teaching practices from an earlier stage in their teacher training course. This recognition reflects a keen awareness of the specialized language needs of learners beyond general language proficiency.

Another important challenge participants chose to expand on was the need to formulate a cohesive curriculum. Two of them noted the difficulty in adequately assessing students' needs without a clearly defined curriculum framework, highlighting a circular challenge where developing a needs assessment survey becomes arduous without prior insights into students' educational requirements.

Furthermore, designing tasks and assessments that align with students' specific goals emerged as a significant concern. While three participants claimed to find this process both challenging and rewarding, they expressed uncertainties about effectively accommodating diverse learning styles in their instructional strategies, often concentrating on communicative tasks as a default approach.

Regarding the role of basic English skills in ESP learning, two participants acknowledged their importance but adopted a nuanced stance on their indispensability. They stressed that while foundational skills are crucial, the primary focus should remain on addressing the specialized objectives and goals set within the ESP context.

Reflecting on their professional growth, participants revealed a commitment to ongoing improvement. They openly discussed areas for refinement in course design, activity development, assessment methods, and objective setting. Despite recognizing areas for

enhancement, they still manifested a sense of satisfaction in meeting personal goals and embracing a continuous learning ethos.

Strengths and weaknesses as course designers

When asked about their major strengths, participants highlighted their ability to align course content, tasks, and materials closely with the specific needs of their students. Specifically, they claimed to be capable of selecting exercises that are relevant and beneficial, often employing creative approaches such as sourcing materials like videos through alternative means when necessary. Moreover, several trainees expressed confidence in developing coherent learning sequences and designing original materials that effectively support course objectives, while also prioritizing the integration of authentic and engaging content resonating with real-life scenarios in the students' professional contexts.

In contrast, common weaknesses included difficulties in time management, selecting appropriate assessment tools, and using authentic materials with students of varying proficiency levels. Time management emerged as a primary concern, with many participants expressing difficulties in balancing the various demands of designing comprehensive ESP courses within constrained time frames. Some trainees admitted struggles in precisely defining aims and objectives, particularly in navigating the specific needs and complexities of the course content. Furthermore, participants acknowledged gaps in their knowledge, particularly in specialized fields like aviation or gastronomy, which contributed to perceived weaknesses, including a perceived lack of variety in instructional methods, tasks, assignments, and evaluation techniques.

Major themes

Participant responses reveal several recurring challenges faced by EFL trainee teachers in the city of Buenos Aires when designing ESP courses. Key themes include the integration of ESP knowledge into general language teaching, the complexities surrounding curriculum development and needs assessment, the strategic alignment of tasks and assessments with learner objectives, considerations of diverse learning styles, and a balanced view on the role of basic language skills in ESP learning outcomes.

Overall, the findings suggest that while participants generally demonstrated a strong commitment to understanding and meeting student needs in ESP course design, they also encountered significant challenges, particularly in areas requiring specialized knowledge and skill development. The diversity in strengths and weaknesses reflects the complex nature of ESP course design, where creativity and adaptability are crucial alongside the need for deeper subject matter expertise.

Discussion

The results indicate a notable disparity in prior experience among EFL trainee teachers in teaching ESP. A substantial majority (80%) of participants had no prior experience in ESP teaching before attending teacher training college. This finding underscores a potential gap in initial preparation for teaching specialized English courses, which may affect confidence and competence in designing ESP curricula. Conversely, 20% of participants had some prior experience, with varying levels ranging from 1 to 15 years. This subgroup's diverse experiences likely influenced their approaches to course design, potentially offering insights into effective practices and challenges in ESP education.

As previously reported, the study identified drafting appropriate aims and objectives, content selection, materials selection, task design, and investigating specialist discourse as the most challenging aspects of ESP course design. These findings resonate with existing literature highlighting the complexity of aligning course content with specific occupational or academic contexts. Participants' struggles with these tasks reflect the inherent difficulties in accessing authentic and relevant materials, understanding disciplinary language use, and selecting appropriate pedagogical approaches. In contrast, aspects such as content selection and evaluation/assessment were perceived as less challenging, suggesting a varying degree of perceived difficulty across different phases of the course design process.

Moreover, participants' specific challenges highlight the practical difficulties faced in ESP contexts. For instance, difficulties in finding authentic materials, particularly in fields like nursing, necessitated resourcefulness in material creation—a time-consuming task that demands pedagogical creativity and innovation. At the same time, participants' initial unfamiliarity with the subject areas they were asked to teach highlights the learning curve involved in adapting to new disciplinary knowledge and translating it into effective teaching strategies.

Overall, participants demonstrated a solid understanding of ESP principles, particularly in recognizing the distinction between EGP and ESP. This foundational understanding is crucial for tailoring course objectives and activities to meet specific learner needs within professional or academic contexts. However, challenges were noted in writing specific, measurable objectives and in incorporating diverse assessment tools and activities that accommodate various learning styles. These challenges reflect ongoing areas of growth for EFL trainee teachers, emphasizing the need for targeted training and support in curriculum design and assessment strategies.

Despite the challenges outlined above, participants identified several strengths in their course design approaches, notably in selecting relevant content aligned with student needs, and in creatively designing tasks and materials. These strengths highlight a commitment to creating engaging and practical learning experiences tailored to ESP contexts. However, weaknesses such as difficulties in time management, selecting appropriate assessment tools, and effectively integrating authentic materials across different proficiency levels were commonly cited. Addressing these weaknesses is crucial for enhancing the overall quality and effectiveness of ESP instruction.

Conclusions and implications

This paper has explored the unique challenges faced by EFL trainee teachers in the city of Buenos Aires when it comes to ESP instruction. These challenges include the necessity to address specific student requirements, a scarcity of suitable teaching materials, and limited opportunities for professional growth (Khan, 2020). Moreover, creating ESP syllabi and choosing suitable teaching resources adds to the challenges faced by EFL trainee teachers in the city of Buenos Aires.

In addition, EFL trainee teachers in this context frequently find themselves ill-prepared for the specialized content they are expected to teach. However, proficiency in the subject matter is not mandatory, as Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argue that ESP teachers need not be subject experts but should have a genuine interest in the subject matter. It is crucial, though, for EFL trainees to familiarize themselves with ESP course materials and enhance their professional competence to transition effectively from EGP teaching to ESP

teaching. This may entail specializing in a specific discipline or engaging in action research within the classroom (Strevens, 1988).

For this transition to be successful, EFL trainee teachers also require comprehensive training to effectively manage diverse student groups characterized by varying proficiency levels. Guiding them through research on genres, discourse forms, and functional language use across different academic disciplines will empower them to design tasks and materials that are appropriate and effective. Moreover, utilizing learners as valuable resources in this process can further enrich the educational experience, fostering a more dynamic and engaging learning environment.

Nevertheless, aspiring ESP teachers must possess a solid foundation in EFL methodology. They must not only be able to select suitable materials but also adapt or create materials from scratch. Additionally, they must be capable of writing course objectives aligned with immediate student needs, as well as developing their own syllabi and assessments. Typically, a combination of different methods and approaches will be necessary. Therefore, trainees must be guided in identifying the techniques and strategies most suitable for their students' particular context and needs.

In conclusion, the findings of this study reinforce the need for ongoing professional development and institutional support to empower future ESP instructors in navigating the complexities of course design and delivery effectively. Addressing these challenges through targeted training modules in teacher education programs can better prepare educators to facilitate meaningful learning experiences in ESP contexts. Specifically, integrating modules focusing on needs analysis, material selection, and pedagogical adaptation would be beneficial. Additionally, support for time management and assessment design could enhance EFL trainee teachers' confidence and proficiency in ESP teaching.

Limitations

Perceptions of challenges in designing ESP courses can be highly subjective, shaped significantly by the individual experiences, backgrounds, and professional contexts of EFL trainee teachers. Each trainee teacher may encounter unique obstacles based on factors such as their prior teaching experiences, educational background, familiarity with ESP principles, and the specific needs of their students or institutions.

This subjectivity implies that the challenges identified by EFL trainee teachers in the city of Buenos Aires may not encompass the entire spectrum of difficulties encountered in designing ESP courses worldwide. Different regions, educational systems, and cultural contexts can introduce varying complexities and priorities in ESP course development that may not be fully represented in a localized study. Moreover, individual perceptions can be influenced by personal biases, interests, and specific professional goals, further shaping their interpretations of what constitutes a challenge in ESP course design.

Therefore, while the insights from this study provide valuable perspectives from EFL trainee teachers in the city of Buenos Aires, they may not comprehensively capture the breadth of challenges faced by educators in different global contexts or those with differing levels of experience in ESP teaching. Understanding these limitations is crucial for contextualizing the findings and recognizing the need for broader comparative studies or additional research to explore the universality versus context-specific nature of these challenges in ESP course design.

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