



Research Article

Designing an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Course for International Banking and Foreign Exchange Officers: A Case Study of Parsian Bank

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ARTICLE INFO

Submission History

Received: 2025-06-11

Accepted: 2025-07-13

Keywords

EFL learners, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Needs Analysis, International Banking, Foreign Exchange, Course Design, Parsian Bank

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to design and evaluate an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course tailored to the linguistic and professional needs of officers working in the International Banking and Foreign Exchange Departments of Parsian Bank. The central objective was to bridge the gap between existing English proficiency and the specialized communicative requirements of global banking operations. A mixed-methods design was employed in two sequential phases. In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews and workplace observations were conducted to identify officers' perceived needs, wants, and lacks. Thematic content analysis informed a researcher-made questionnaire, piloted with 30 participants and later administered to 100 officers. Construct validity and exploratory factor analysis were tested using SPSS. Additionally, the Oxford Placement Test was administered to assess general proficiency. Based on the results, a seven-unit ESP coursebook was developed, covering key banking topics. Participants were divided into control and experimental groups (n = 50 each). The control group completed a pretest and self-study period, while the experimental group received 14 sessions of instruction using the coursebook. Posttest results indicated significant improvements in the experimental group's reading, writing, and lexical skills. The findings suggest that a needs-based ESP course can enhance communicative competence in international banking contexts and should be considered for broader implementation across the sector.



Introduction

The globalization of the banking sector has necessitated the use of English as the lingua franca for international communication, particularly in areas such as foreign exchange and international banking. Employees in these departments are required to possess not only general English proficiency but also specialized language skills to perform tasks such as drafting formal correspondence, understanding financial documents, and communicating with international clients (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). However, many banking professionals, especially in non-English-speaking countries, face challenges in meeting these linguistic demands due to insufficient training and lack of tailored language programs (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

This study addresses the need for an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course designed specifically for officers in the International Banking and Foreign Exchange Departments of Parsian Bank. Using a mixed-methods approach—including semi-structured interviews, a researcher-made questionnaire, observations, and the Oxford Placement Test (OPT)—the research identifies critical gaps in English proficiency, particularly in reading and writing, which directly affect professional performance. Notably, exploratory factor analysis reveals that participants prioritize the practical utility of English courses, the proficiency-driven motivation behind language learning, and the skills-based language needs (especially vocabulary and reading comprehension) as central to their workplace communication.

Guided by these insights, the study develops a seven-unit ESP course-book designed to address the linguistic and professional demands of international banking. The course content includes modules on Letter of Credit (LC), Letter of Guarantee (LG), SWIFT codes, UCP 600,

business correspondence, general banking terminology, and Incoterms—areas identified as crucial through both qualitative feedback and statistical analysis.

Literature Review

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a dynamic and evolving field within English Language Teaching (ELT), focused on addressing the specific linguistic and communicative needs of learners in particular professional or academic contexts (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Anthony, 2018). It is grounded in the principle that language instruction should be tailored to the learners' goals, disciplines, or workplaces. ESP courses typically center on the development of language competencies required for job-related tasks, such as writing emails, conducting meetings, or reading technical documentation (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Woodrow, 2018).

In the banking sector, ESP plays a crucial role due to the globalization of financial services, where English is the dominant medium of international communication (Crystal, 2003; Kirkpatrick, 2007). Professionals working in banking institutions must master specialized terminology and formal registers to engage in foreign exchange operations, manage corporate finance tasks, and draft or interpret complex financial documents (Bhatia, 1993; Paltridge, 2020). Moreover, the digital transformation of banking services has intensified the need for clear, precise, and professional English in digital customer interactions and cross-border transactions (Forey & Lockwood, 2007).

Needs analysis remains at the heart of ESP course development, ensuring that instruction reflects real-world demands and learners' specific goals (West, 1994; Long, 2005; Basturkmen, 2014). A rigorous needs analysis draws on multiple data sources—such as surveys, interviews, observations, and task analysis—to map the language needs of

professionals within their specific work environment (Brown, 2016). For example, in the context of financial institutions, typical language tasks may include writing investment reports, handling client inquiries, or interpreting international regulations and legal texts (Belcher, 2006; Charles, 2015).

Several empirical studies have explored the application of needs analysis in the banking sector. Al-Saleem (2012), in a study of Saudi bank employees, identified writing and reading as the most critical skills for workplace performance. Likewise, Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2015) found that employees in Oman required focused instruction in formal correspondence and financial vocabulary. These findings underscore the significance of tailoring ESP courses to institutional needs and employee roles (Evans & Green, 2007; Gillaerts & Gotti, 2005).

Despite widespread acknowledgment of English as a global business language, many professionals in non-English-speaking countries still face gaps in essential language competencies—particularly in writing formal documents, interpreting technical material, and interacting with international clients (Hyland, 2006; Johns, 2013). Such deficiencies can compromise operational efficiency, client satisfaction, and international reputation (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Belcher, 2006). Therefore, it is essential for ESP curricula to incorporate authentic tasks, genre-specific instruction, and business-specific scenarios (Paltridge, 2020; Woodrow, 2018).

Overall, the literature highlights the need for up-to-date, context-sensitive ESP training programs for banking professionals. With increasing emphasis on digital communication, regulatory compliance, and global operations, ESP course designers must adopt an interdisciplinary and evidence-based approach to meet evolving professional demands.

Related Research

A number of studies have examined the implementation and effectiveness of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs in various professional contexts, including finance, business, and banking. These studies often emphasize the role of targeted language instruction in enhancing professional communication, workplace performance, and cross-cultural interaction (Tsou & Chen, 2014; Bocanegra-Valle, 2016). In the banking and finance sector, where accuracy, clarity, and speed are crucial, ESP training has been shown to improve employees' confidence and competence, especially in writing reports, emails, and interpreting financial statements (Fuentes, 2004; Chen, 2009).

A study by Liu and Chen (2014) explored the effectiveness of ESP instruction for financial professionals in Taiwan and reported that learners demonstrated significant improvements in both technical vocabulary acquisition and overall communicative competence. Similarly, Ko (2012) evaluated an ESP program designed for bank clerks in South Korea, concluding that authentic materials and task-based activities closely aligned with workplace needs led to measurable gains in job-related performance. These findings align with Dudley-Evans and St John's (1998) framework, which emphasizes the importance of specificity and authenticity in ESP course design.

Moreover, recent research has focused on digital transformation and its implications for ESP training. For instance, Khan and Nawaz (2021) investigated the impact of digital banking communication on English language needs in Pakistani banks. Their results indicate a growing demand for digital literacy combined with domain-specific English, particularly for customer service and online financial platforms. This underscores the necessity for updated ESP curricula that

integrate ICT tools and real-world simulations (López-Sánchez & Sánchez-Gómez, 2020).

In addition to banking, studies in related financial domains provide further insight into the specialized nature of English use. For example, Nickerson (2005) analyzed English usage in multinational corporations and identified genre conventions specific to financial discourse, such as executive summaries, audit reports, and shareholder communications. These studies not only highlight the value of needs-based instruction but also reinforce the idea that ESP teaching must evolve with industry trends and workplace technologies.

Related Research in Iran

In Iran, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has gained growing attention, especially in professional fields such as banking, business, and economics. Several studies have explored the specific English language needs of employees in Iranian financial institutions. For instance, Ghanbari and Rasekh (2009) conducted a needs analysis for ESP learners in an Iranian business school, emphasizing that learners required focused training in reading and writing financial texts, especially reports and formal correspondence.

Similarly, Eslami (2010) investigated the ESP needs of bank employees and found that most professionals struggled with understanding English-language financial documents and effectively writing business emails. The study emphasized that many ESP programs in Iran still rely on general English content, which does not meet the real-world linguistic demands of financial institutions. This gap between course content and workplace needs has been highlighted by several researchers as a key challenge in ESP education in Iran (Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008).

Moreover, Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2015) emphasized the role of genre-based instruction in

Iranian ESP courses, arguing that teaching the rhetorical and structural conventions of financial texts improves learners' confidence and communication accuracy. Their research supports the use of authentic materials and workplace simulations to enhance learner engagement and performance.

More recent studies have also explored the digital shift in Iranian banking communication. For example, Ghorbani and Golparvar (2020) noted that digital platforms have increased the need for English skills among front-line banking staff, particularly in online customer service interactions. These findings suggest that ESP course developers must continuously adapt to the evolving linguistic and technological demands of Iran's banking sector.

The current study was conducted in order to find an answer to the following questions:

***RQ¹**. What specific language needs do foreign exchange and international banking department officers at Parsian Bank identify for effective workplace communication?*

***RQ²**. What gaps exist between the current English proficiency levels of bank employees and the demands of international banking tasks?*

***RQ³**. How can a needs-based ESP syllabus be designed to address identified language deficiencies and align with international banking standards?*

***RQ⁴**. What criteria should be used to validate the study questionnaire for identifying employees' English language needs?*

Method

Design and Context

This study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design to systematically investigate and address the English language needs of officers in the International Banking and Foreign Exchange Departments of Parsian Bank. The research was conducted in two distinct but interrelated phases: a

qualitative phase aimed at identifying nuanced language needs in the target professional context, followed by a quantitative phase to validate and generalize these findings across a broader population. Central to this study was the notion of developing a syllabus—understood as a structured transformation of needs analysis data into a pedagogically sound blueprint that facilitates targeted teaching and learning outcomes aligned with real-world banking communication.

The first, qualitative phase was driven by the interpretive paradigm and sought to uncover officers' lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges concerning their English language use in occupational settings. To that end, semi-structured interviews and direct workplace observations were employed to elicit deep, contextual insights into the officers' communicative tasks, deficiencies, and expectations. These methods enabled the researcher to engage directly with participants, thereby constructing a rich and grounded understanding of the linguistic demands inherent in international banking and foreign exchange operations. The findings from this phase formed the empirical basis for designing a researcher-made questionnaire, ensuring that subsequent data collection in the quantitative phase would be contextually valid and responsive to actual workplace needs.

The quantitative phase of the study was designed to test the generalizability and statistical reliability of the insights obtained in the qualitative phase. The questionnaire—piloted and revised based on the qualitative findings—was administered to a larger cohort of banking professionals. Supplementary instruments such as the Oxford Placement Test were used to assess English proficiency levels in grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing. Quantitative methods, including descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis, were employed to validate the instrument and analyze

patterns in language needs. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the developed ESP syllabus was evaluated through a quasi-experimental design, comparing pre- and posttest results of control and experimental groups. This integrated methodological framework allowed the researchers to triangulate data, enhance the study's internal validity, and offer empirically grounded recommendations for ESP curriculum development in the banking sector.

Participants

The participants of this study were ten managers and heads of departments in the international banking and foreign exchange sectors took part in the interview phase of the research to gain a comprehensive understanding of officers' desire for an ESP course. The reason for selecting officers from the international banking and foreign exchange sectors was their need for communicative English language skills and their general lack of qualifications in meeting their English language needs in occupational contexts. One hundred officers, managers, and deputies from the foreign exchange and international affairs departments, along with superior users and tellers, all working in different branches of Parsian Bank, answered the questionnaire on employees' English language needs. The participants' extensive experience was considered a decisive factor for the researcher in analyzing their needs and deficiencies. Sixty officers, managers, and deputies from the foreign exchange and international affairs departments, along with superior users and tellers, all working in different branches of Parsian Bank, took the Oxford Placement Test to determine the English language proficiency level of employees. Fifty officers, managers, and deputies from the foreign exchange and international affairs departments, along with superior users and tellers, all working in different branches of Parsian Bank, served as the Control Group. Fifty officers, managers, and

deputies from the foreign exchange and international affairs departments, along with superior users and tellers, all working in different branches of Parsian Bank, served as the experimental group.

Instruments

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, observations, and the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). The findings from this research will contribute to the development of a tailored ESP course that addresses the specific linguistic and professional needs of the target group. The research design includes the following steps:

Semi-Structured Interviews

Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers, deputies, and officers in the International Banking and Foreign Exchange Departments of Parsian Bank. The interviews aimed to explore participants' language needs, challenges, and expectations.

Questionnaire

A researcher-made questionnaire was developed and administered to 100 participants to identify their English language needs and challenges. The questionnaire focused on the four language skills and their relevance to tasks in the foreign exchange units.

Observation

Observations were conducted to identify implicit language needs, particularly in tasks such as report writing and formal communication.

Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

The OPT was administered to 60 participants to assess their English proficiency levels, particularly in grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing.

Tentative Course Design

Based on the findings from the needs analysis, a seven-unit ESP course-book was developed,

focusing on key areas such as Letter of Credit (LC), Letter of Guarantee (LG), SWIFT codes, UCP, Business Correspondence, General Banking Information, and Incoterms.

Data analysis

Interview data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative content analysis techniques, and questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). In addition, construct validity and factor analysis were performed on the researcher-made questionnaire using SPSS to examine its underlying structure and validity. The Oxford Placement Test was analyzed through using descriptive statistics and visual data representations. Measures such as mean, median, mode, range, variance, and standard deviation helped interpret the distribution and performance of participants.

The results of the pretest in the quantitative part were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including measures such as mean, median, mode, range, variance, and standard deviation, to compare the initial performance levels of the experimental and control groups. This analysis revealed that both groups had nearly identical mean and median scores, indicating comparable baseline proficiency levels. However, differences emerged in the mode and variability of scores, with the experimental group showing a higher mode and greater variance and standard deviation, suggesting a wider spread in performance and the presence of high-performing outliers. These findings are crucial as they establish a balanced starting point between the groups while also highlighting potential implications for how participants might respond differently to subsequent instructional interventions based on their varying initial abilities.

The results of posttest in the quantitative part was analyzed by this method to show any probable difference in related English knowledge between two groups of control and experimental and also

any probable effectiveness of the designed material. The final results of two phases, quantitative and qualitative of the research, integrated together to point out the effectiveness of the developed

material as the outcome of the study. Besides, the findings of this research will be useful for all foreign exchange and international banking department officers of domestic banks in Iran.

Table 1

Facto analysis and construct validity of the researcher made questionnaire:

Rotated Factor Matrix ^a							
	1	2	3	Factor 4	5	6	7
Course 2	.970						
Course 3	.951						
Proficiency 4	.926						
Proficiency 2		.963					
Proficiency 5		.944					
Proficiency 3		.875					
Needs 2							
Skills 3			.876				
Sub-skills 1			.866				
Proficiency1				.676			
Skills 1				.651			
Needs 1							
Needs 5							
Skills 2					.691		
Needs 3							
Sub-skills 2						.703	
Needs 6							
Needs 4							.665
Course 1							

Key Factor Loadings:

- Factor 1: Course 2 (0.970), Course 3 (0.951), Proficiency 4 (0.926) → "Course Utility and Proficiency".
- Factor 2: Proficiency 2 (0.963), Proficiency 5 (0.944) → "Proficiency Impact".
- Factor 3: Reading Skills (0.876), Vocabulary (0.866) → "Language Skills".
- Factor 4: Proficiency 1 (0.676), Four Skills (0.651) → "Basic Proficiency".
- Factor 5: Writing Skills (0.691) → "Writing Ability".
- Factor 6: English Grammar (0.703) → "Grammar Knowledge".

- Factor 7: Needs 4 (0.665) → "Daily Task Needs".

The rotated matrix reveals distinct constructs. Factors 1–3 are strongly defined, while others (e.g., Factor 7) are less clear. Some variables (e.g., Needs1) do not load strongly on any factor.

Interpretation of the three most prominent factors based on how they cluster the variables.

Factor 1 - Practical Utility of English Language Courses

High Loadings:

- English Language Courses are essential (.970)

- Usefulness of English Language Courses (.951)
- Officers' English Proficiency in General/Business English (.926)

This factor represents the perceived value and applicability of English training in participants' work context. The very high loadings suggest that learners highly prioritize practical and professional benefits of English especially through structured courses. It supports the claim that structured language education is crucial, justifies the inclusion of tailored English courses in professional training programs, and it can be linked to motivation and investment in language learning at the institutional level.

Factor 2 - Proficiency-Driven Motivation

High Loadings:

- Officers' English Proficiency Accelerates Task Performance (.963)
- Officers Should Have at Least Intermediate English (.944)
- Officers' English Proficiency Boosts Work Motivation (.875)

This factor groups items related to how language proficiency directly enhances job performance and motivation. Employees see English skills as a means of improving efficiency, career advancement, and confidence. This factor demonstrates a clear link between language competence and job performance, supports the development of programs emphasizing intermediate-level mastery as a workplace standard, and highlights the instrumental motivation in English learning among your participants.

Factor 3 - Skills-Based Language Needs

High Loadings:

- Reading Skills (.876)
- English Vocabulary (.866)

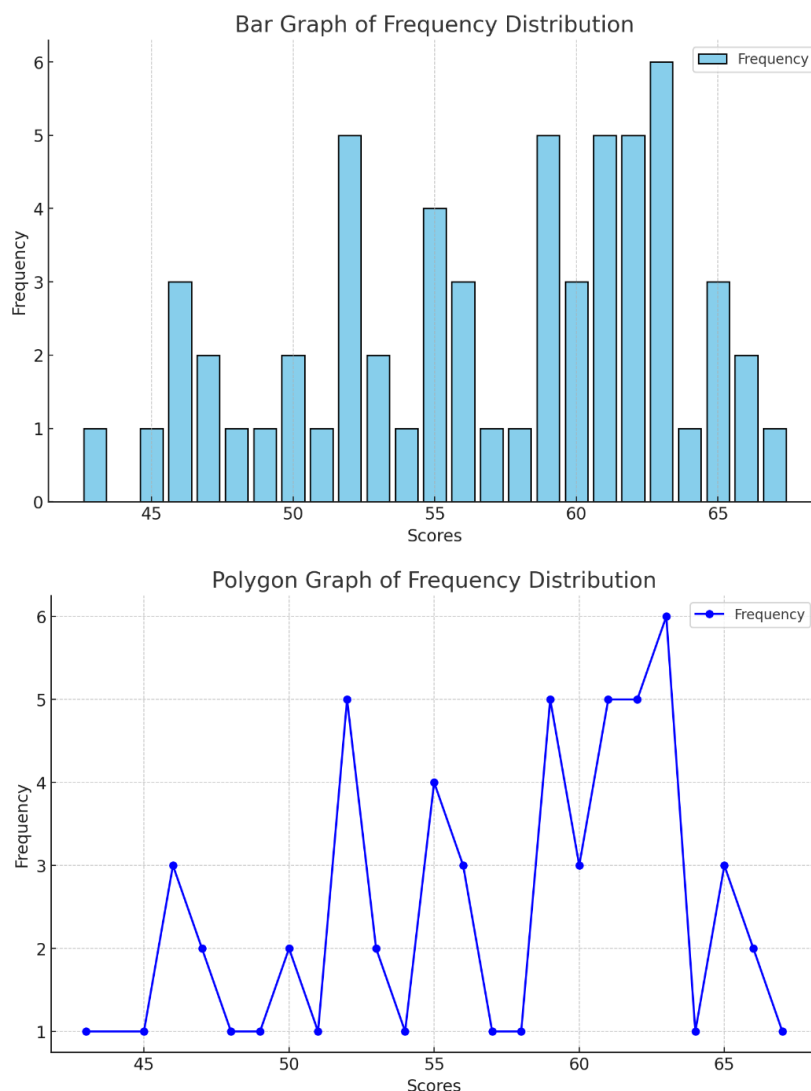
This factor groups core linguistic and comprehension skills. It suggests that the development of reading and vocabulary is a central

need, likely due to the nature of the participants' daily tasks (e.g., interpreting documents, understanding emails, reports). This factor indicates the need for curriculum that strengthens comprehension and lexical competence. Moreover reinforces the necessity of task-based learning that mimics real workplace reading demands.

The factor analysis yielded a seven-factor solution, of which three were especially dominant and meaningful for the objectives of the current study. The first factor, "Practical Utility of English Language Courses," underscored the importance of course-based instruction tailored to workplace needs, as evidenced by extremely high loadings on items such as "Usefulness of English Language Courses" (.951). The second factor, "Proficiency-Driven Motivation," highlighted how participants perceived English as integral to their task performance and professional growth. The third factor, "Skills-Based Language Needs," reflected a strong emphasis on developing reading skills and vocabulary, confirming the relevance of comprehension in their job roles. These factors are central to shaping effective curriculum and policy recommendations in the context of ESP programs.

Table 2
Analysis and Interpretation of Data
Oxford Placement Test Analysis

The statistics for the Oxford Placement Test are as follows:



Above are the polygon and bar graphs for the frequency distribution of the Oxford Placement Test scores. These visualizations help to observe the distribution and frequency trends of the scores effectively.

A detailed analysis of the Oxford Placement Test scores provides valuable insights into the participants' language proficiency. The mean score of 56.95 indicates an average level of performance across the group, while the median score of 59.0—slightly higher than the mean—suggests a slight skew toward higher performance levels, possibly

influenced by a subset of high-scoring individuals. The mode score of 63, representing the most frequently occurring score, further supports this tendency. In terms of variability, a range of 24 points reflects moderate score dispersion among participants. The variance (39.64) and standard deviation (6.30) indicate that most scores are relatively concentrated around the mean, albeit with some spread. Notably, the higher values of the median and mode compared to the mean point to a negatively skewed distribution, implying that while the majority of participants performed well, a

smaller number of lower scores may have lowered the average. This interpretation is further corroborated by visual data representations, such as

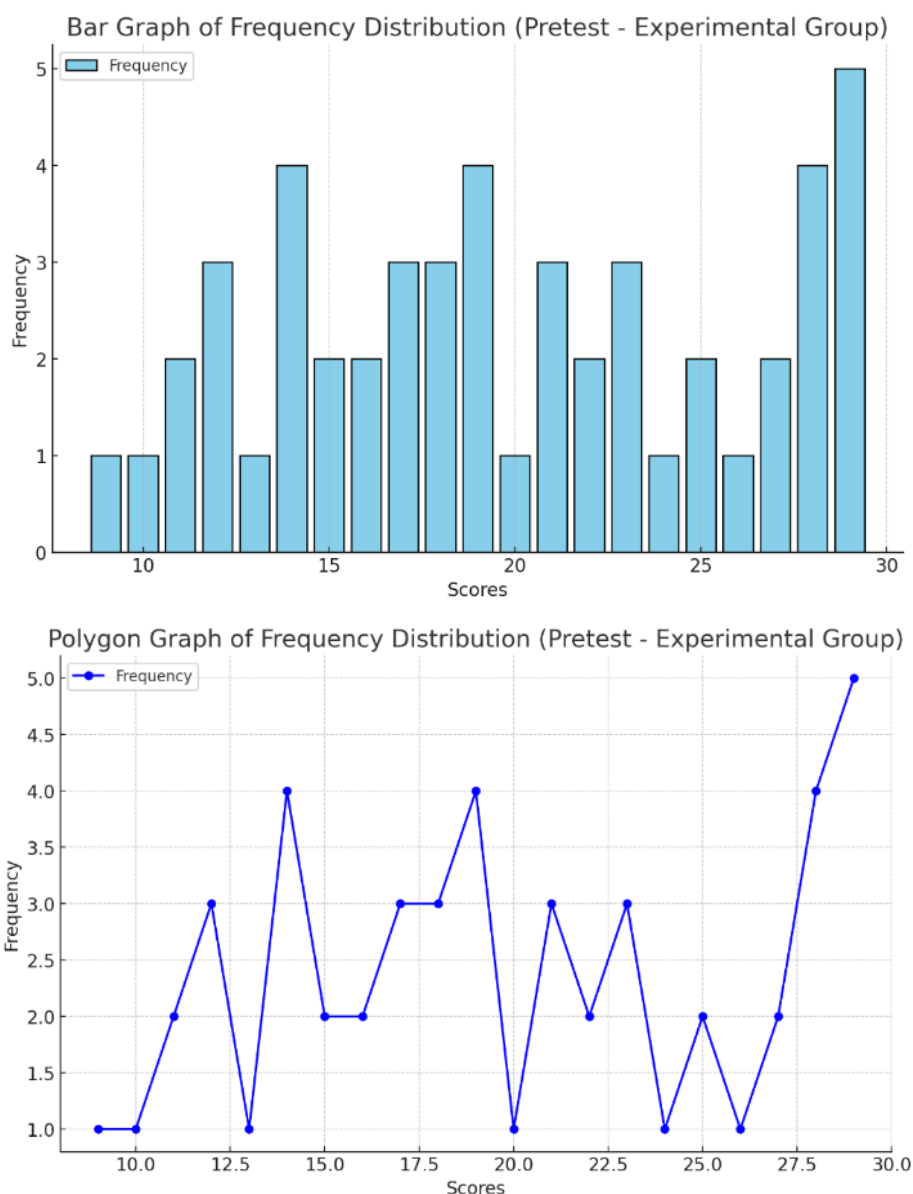
frequency polygons and bar charts, which likely show clustering near the higher end of the score spectrum.

Table 3

Pretest Comparison: Experimental Group vs. Control Group

Experimental Group Statistics:

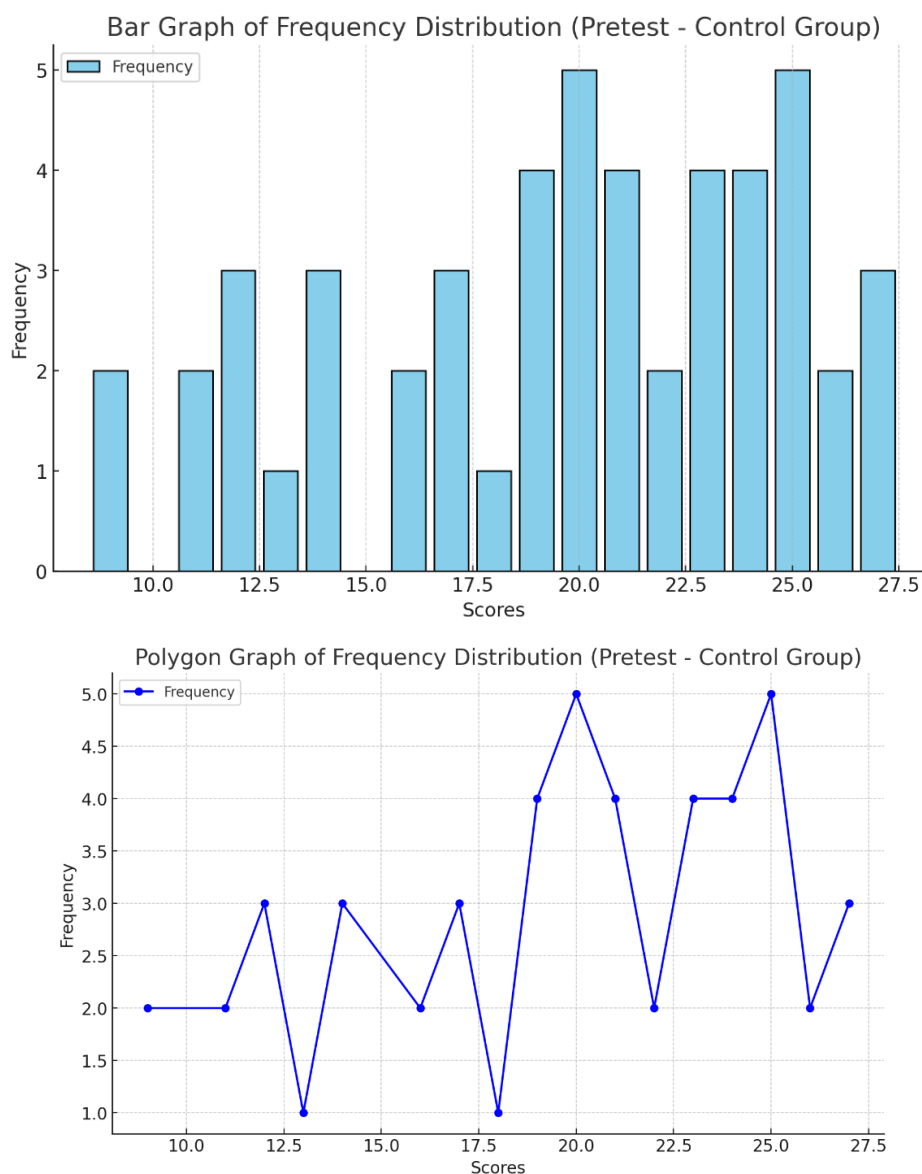
Mean: 19.92; Median: 19.0; Mode: 29; Range: 20; Variance: 36.56; SD: 6.05



Above are the polygon and bar graphs for the frequency distribution of the Pretest scores for the Experimental Group have been generated. These visualizations illustrate the distribution and frequency of the scores effectively.

Control Group Statistics:

Mean: 19.64; Median: 20.0; Mode: 20; Range: 18; Variance: 25.91; SD: 5.09



Above are the polygon and bar graphs for the frequency distribution of the Pretest scores for the Control Group have been generated. These visualizations effectively illustrate the distribution and frequency of the scores.

Comparison of Descriptive Statistics between Experimental and Control Groups

Similarities:

The descriptive statistics reveal notable similarities between the experimental and control groups at the baseline level. Specifically, the mean scores (19.92 for the Experimental Group and 19.64 for the Control Group) and the median scores (19.0 vs. 20.0, respectively) are remarkably close, suggesting

that both groups demonstrated a comparable level of initial performance. Moreover, the close alignment between mean and median values in both groups indicates relatively symmetric distributions of scores, with no significant skewness apparent at this stage.

Differences:

Despite their overall similarities, several key differences are observable between the two groups. Notably, the mode of the Experimental Group (29) is considerably higher than that of the Control Group (20), which may indicate the presence of high-performing outliers or a wider spread in the scores of the Experimental Group. Additionally,

the Experimental Group displays greater variability in performance, with a range of 20, a variance of 36.56, and a standard deviation of 6.05. In contrast, the Control Group shows a slightly narrower range (18), lower variance (25.91), and standard deviation (5.09), reflecting a more concentrated score distribution.

Implications:

The observed differences in variability have important implications for interpreting the results

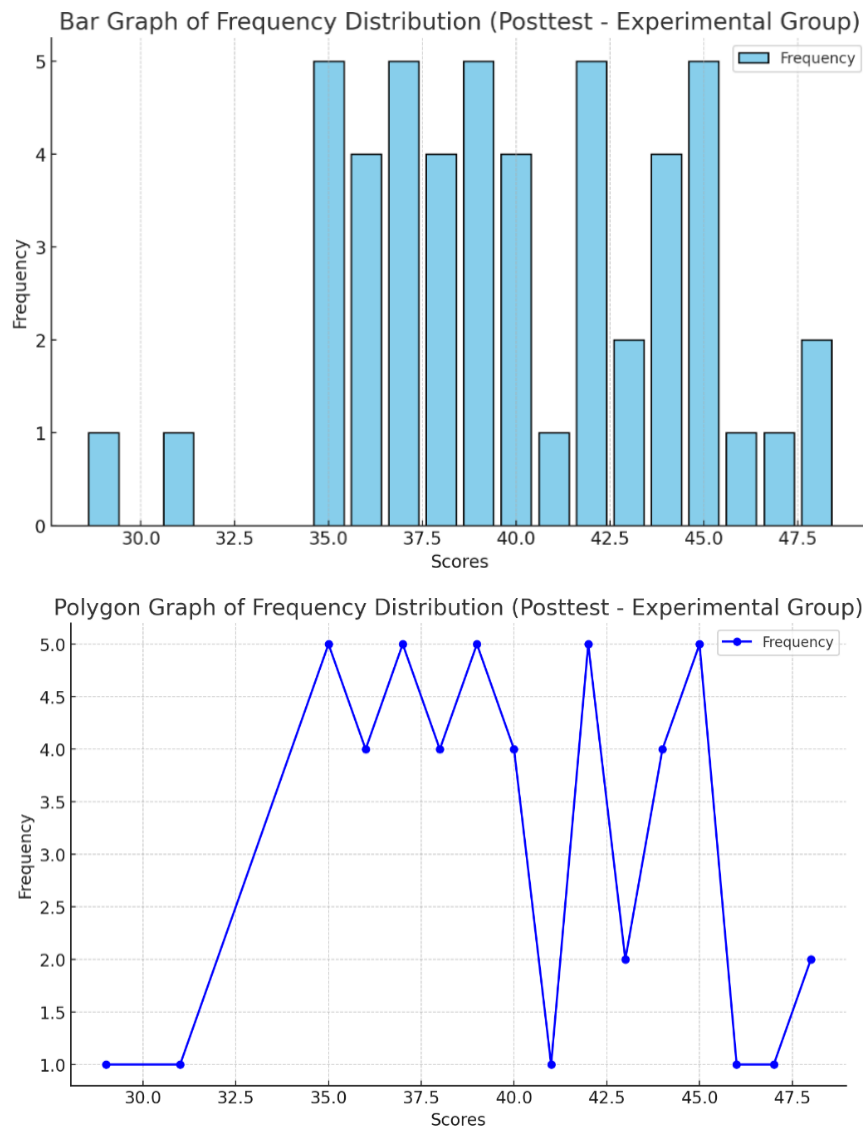
of the study. The greater dispersion in the Experimental Group suggests a broader range of baseline language abilities, which could potentially affect how individuals within this group respond to instructional interventions. Such diversity might allow for more noticeable gains among lower-performing individuals or more targeted instructional differentiation throughout the intervention phase.

Table 4

Posttest Comparison: Experimental Group vs. Control Group

Experimental Group Statistics:

Mean: 39.96; Median: 39.5; Mode: 35; Range: 19; Variance: 18.32; SD: 4.28

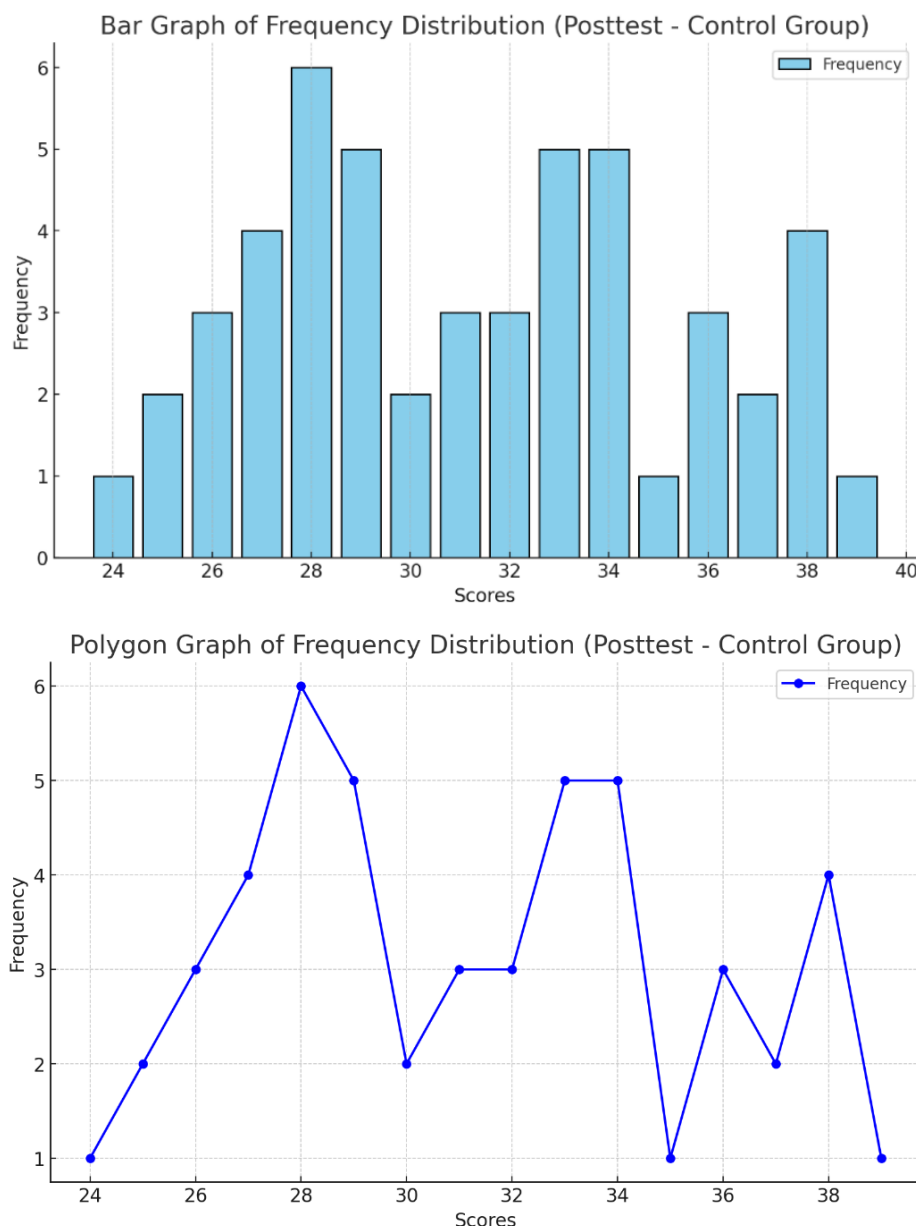


Above are the polygon and bar graphs for the frequency distribution of the Posttest scores for the Experimental Group have been generated. These visualizations effectively show the distribution and frequency of the scores.

Control Group Statistics:

Mean: 31.3; Median: 31.0; Mode: 28; Range: 15;

Variance: 16.79; SD: 4.10



Above are the polygon and bar graphs for the frequency distribution of the Posttest scores for the Control Group have been generated. These visualizations effectively showcase the distribution and frequency of the scores.

Comparison of Posttest Performance between Experimental and Control Groups

An analysis of posttest results reveals that the Experimental Group significantly outperformed the Control Group across all central tendency measures. The mean score for the Experimental Group was 39.96 compared to 31.3 for the Control Group, while the median scores were 39.5 and 31.0, respectively. Similarly, the mode was higher

in the Experimental Group (35) than in the Control Group (28), indicating a notable performance advantage. These results clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of the instructional intervention applied to the Experimental Group.

In terms of variability, both groups exhibited reduced dispersion in posttest scores compared to their respective pretest results. This general decrease in variability suggests a convergence in performance and more consistent outcomes across participants. Nevertheless, the Experimental Group showed slightly higher variability, with a range of 19, a variance of 18.32, and a standard deviation of 4.28, compared to the Control Group's range of 15, variance of 16.79, and

standard deviation of 4.10. This greater spread in the Experimental Group may reflect a broader impact of the intervention, benefiting learners across a wider spectrum of ability levels.

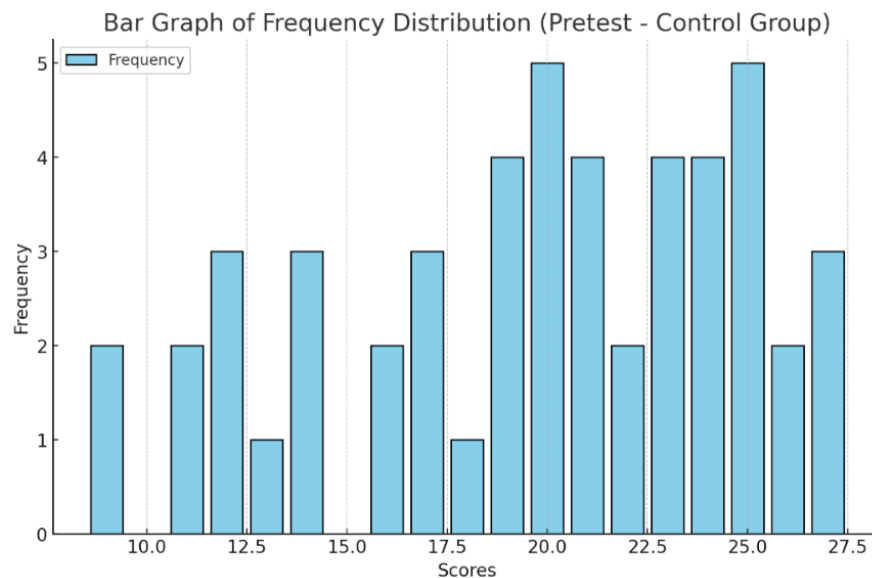
Regarding score distribution, the Experimental Group's mode shifted upward from 29 in the pretest to 35 in the posttest, now more closely aligned with the mean and median. This suggests enhanced consistency in performance and a reduction in extreme outliers. In the Control Group, the mode also increased, from 20 to 28, indicating some improvement, albeit to a lesser extent than that observed in the Experimental Group.

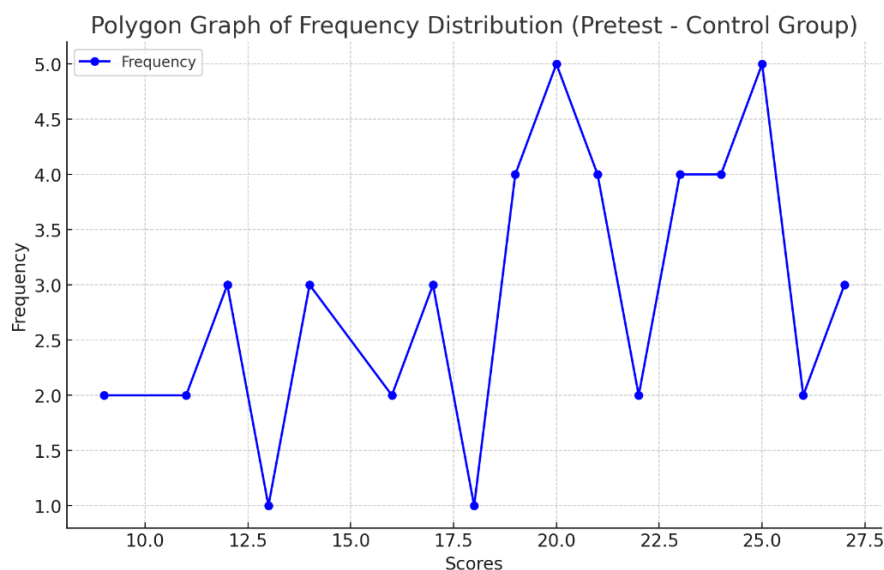
Table 5

Control Group Analysis: Pretest vs. Posttest

Pretest Statistics:

Mean: 19.64; Median: 20.0; Mode: 20; Range: 18; Variance: 25.91; SD: 5.09

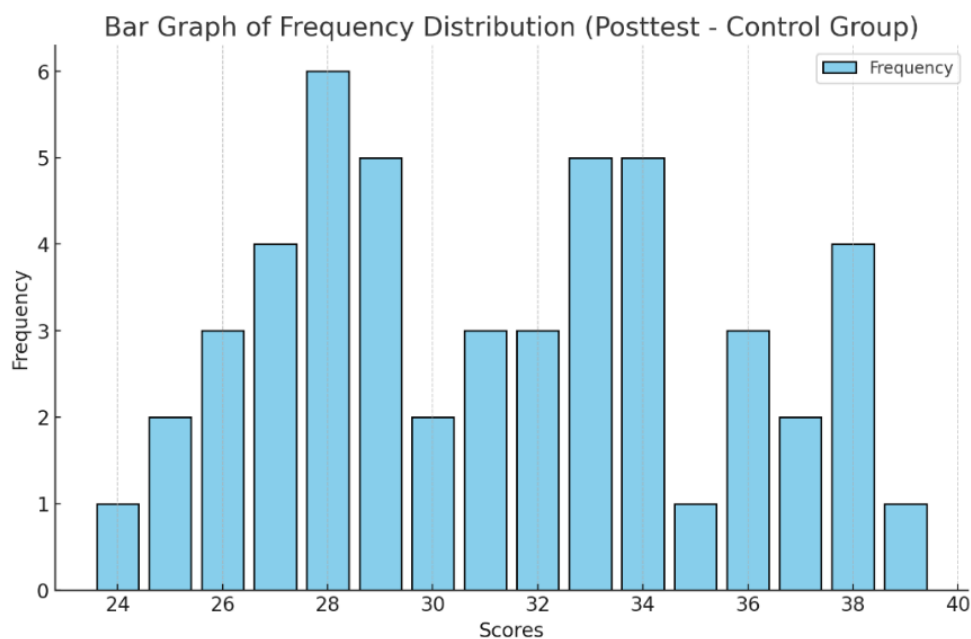


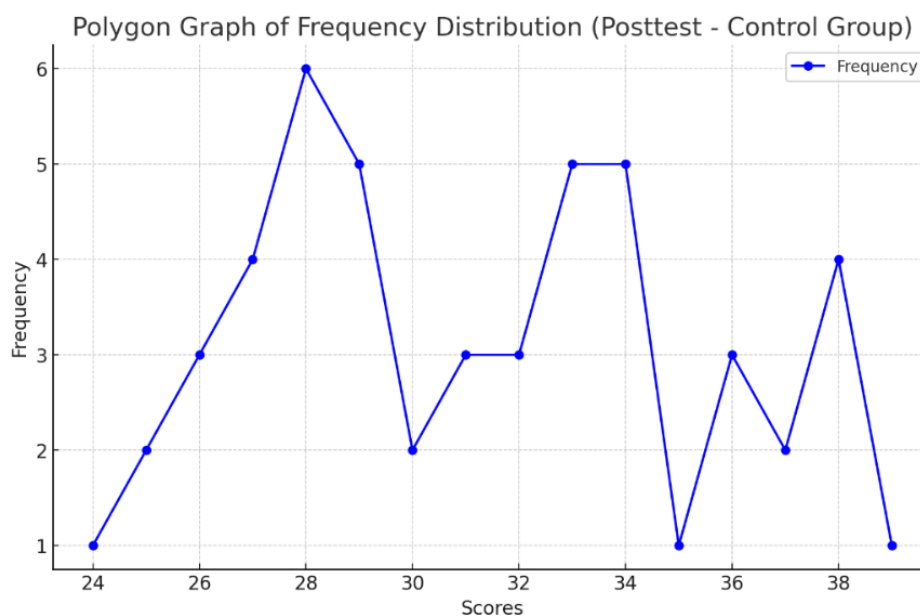


Above are the polygon and bar graphs for the frequency distribution of the Pretest scores for the Control Group have been generated. These visualizations effectively illustrate the distribution and frequency of the scores.

Posttest Statistics:

Mean: 31.3; Median: 31.0; Mode: 28; Range: 15;
Variance: 16.79; SD: 4.10





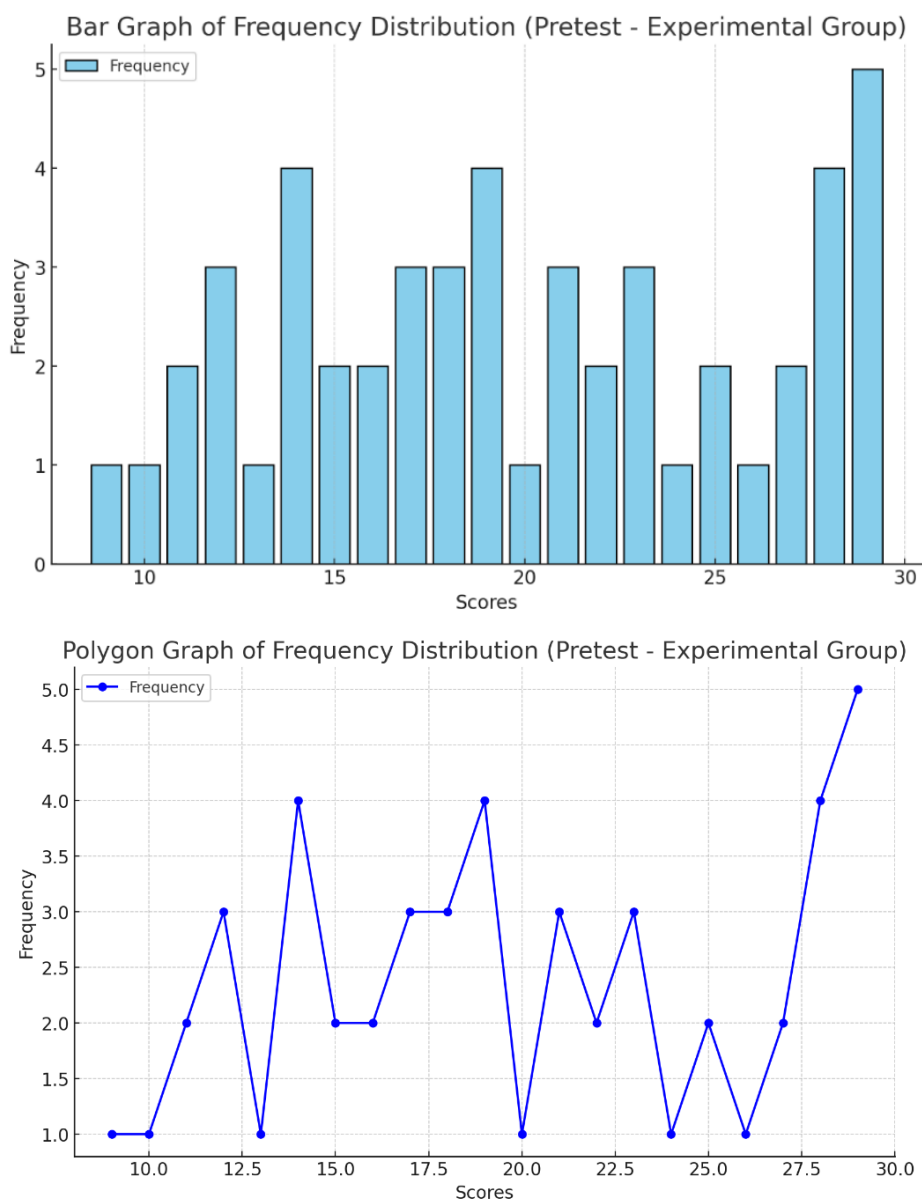
Above are the polygon and bar graphs for the frequency distribution of the Posttest scores for the Control Group have been generated. These visualizations effectively showcase the distribution and frequency of the scores.

The analysis of the Control Group's performance reveals a notable improvement in central tendency indicators. Specifically, the mean increased from 19.64 to 31.3 (+11.66), and the median rose from 20.0 to 31.0 (+11.0), indicating

meaningful learning gains following the intervention. Additionally, the mode shifted upward, further supporting the trend of improved overall scores. In terms of variability, a decrease in the range (-3), variance (-9.12), and standard deviation (-0.99) suggests enhanced consistency in performance among participants. These reductions imply that the intervention may have contributed to more standardized learning outcomes across the group.

Table 6**Experimental Group Analysis: Pretest vs. Posttest***Pretest Statistics:*

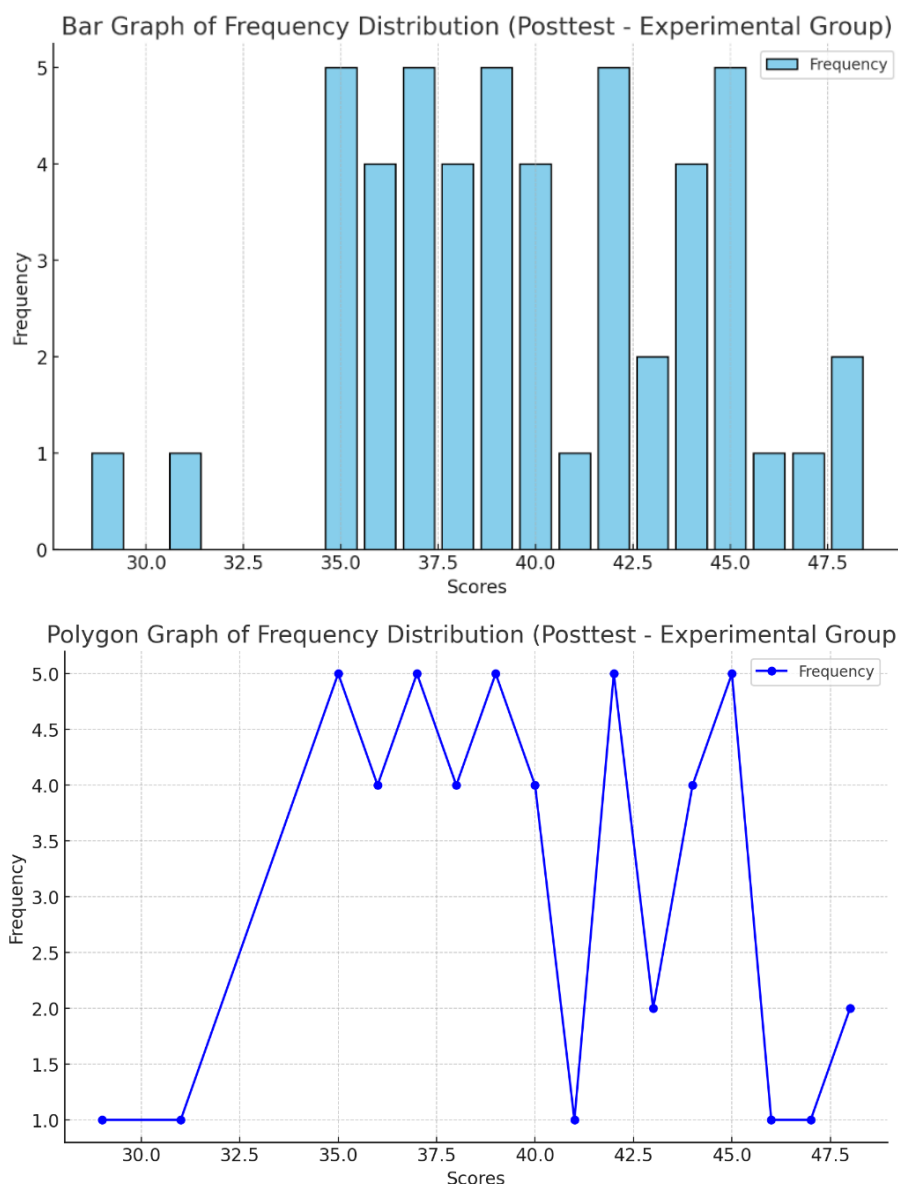
Mean: 19.92; Median: 19.0; Mode: 29; Range: 20; Variance: 36.56; SD: 6.05



Above are the polygon and bar graphs for the frequency distribution of the Pretest scores for the Experimental Group have been generated. These visualizations illustrate the distribution and frequency of the scores effectively.

Posttest Statistics:

Mean: 39.96; Median: 39.5; Mode: 35; Range: 19; Variance: 18.32; SD: 4.28



Above are the polygon and bar graphs for the frequency distribution of the Posttest scores for the Experimental Group have been generated. These visualizations effectively show the distribution and frequency of the scores.

The Experimental Group demonstrated a dramatic improvement, as evidenced by the increase in mean score from 19.92 to 39.96 (+20.04) and median score from 19.0 to 39.5 (+20.5), underscoring the significant impact of the intervention. Additionally, the upward shift in mode reflects a notable enhancement in the most frequently occurring scores. Furthermore, the

reduction in variability metrics—including a decrease in range by 1 (–1), variance by 18.24 (–18.24), and standard deviation by 1.77 (–1.77)—indicates a more consistent and robust improvement across the participants in the Experimental Group.

The Oxford Placement Test results indicated moderate variability with a tendency toward higher scores. Pretest comparisons showed that both groups started at similar baseline levels, although the Experimental Group exhibited slightly greater variability. Posttest comparisons demonstrated superior performance and more substantial

improvements in the Experimental Group, confirming the effectiveness of the intervention. While both groups improved from pretest to posttest, the Experimental Group's gains were more pronounced. Additionally, the reduction in variability observed in the posttests suggests increased consistency in participants' scores. Overall, these findings indicate that the intervention had a positive and measurable impact on the Experimental Group's performance.

Result

RQ1: What specific language needs do foreign exchange and international banking department officers at Parsian Bank identify for effective workplace communication?

The findings from the semi-structured interviews and questionnaire revealed that the most critical language needs for officers in the International Banking and Foreign Exchange Departments are writing, reading, and vocabulary. Participants emphasized the importance of writing formal emails, drafting reports, and understanding financial documents. In addition to the insights gained from the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, the factor analysis further clarifies the specific language needs of officers in the International Banking and Foreign Exchange Departments at Parsian Bank. The Rotated Factor Matrix revealed a strong third factor labeled "Skills-Based Language Needs," with high loadings on reading skills (0.876) and vocabulary (0.866). This statistical evidence supports the qualitative findings by highlighting that the ability to comprehend documents and use specialized vocabulary is a critical requirement in these departments. These needs are likely driven by the daily demands of interpreting financial texts, international regulations, and official correspondence. The alignment between participants' perceptions and statistical groupings reinforces the urgency of

developing ESP curricula that emphasize reading comprehension and lexical proficiency tailored to real workplace scenarios (As shown in Table 1).

RQ2: What gaps exist between the current English proficiency levels of bank employees and the demands of international banking tasks?

The results of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) revealed that the average score of the bank employees in the international and foreign exchange operations departments was 56.95. With a median score of 59.0 and a mode of 63, the central tendency measures indicate that a significant portion of the participants scored above the average. Given that the Oxford Placement Test categorizes scores around 50–59 as corresponding to a B1 (Intermediate) level, and scores of 60+ indicating an upper-intermediate proficiency (B2), it can be inferred that the majority of participants either reached or surpassed the intermediate threshold. Additionally, the relatively low standard deviation (6.30) and a negatively skewed distribution suggest that lower scores were outliers rather than representative of the group, and the majority performed at or above the B1 level. In response to the research question—*What gaps exist between the current English proficiency levels of bank employees and the demands of international banking tasks?*—these findings imply that the baseline proficiency of the sampled employees meets the minimum language requirement (Intermediate level) for participating in international banking functions. While the data suggest that there may still be room for improvement to meet more advanced linguistic demands (e.g., for negotiation, compliance, or detailed correspondence), the current level is sufficient for routine communication and transactional tasks. This forms a solid basis for further targeted language training to bridge any remaining functional gaps (As presented in table 2).

RQ3: How can a needs-based ESP syllabus be designed to address identified language deficiencies and align with international banking standards?

To design a needs-based ESP syllabus that addresses language deficiencies and aligns with international banking standards, a systematic and research-informed approach must be followed. In the current study, the syllabus was developed through a comprehensive needs analysis incorporating present situation analysis (PSA) and target situation analysis (TSA). Data were collected using a combination of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and placement tests to identify both the current linguistic capabilities and the specific communicative needs of officers working in the International Banking and Foreign Exchange Departments at Parsian Bank.

Based on the needs analysis, a seven-unit ESP course-book was developed, focusing on key areas such as Letter of Credit (LC), Letter of Guarantee (LG), SWIFT codes, UCP, Business Correspondence, General Banking Information, and Incoterms. The course-book incorporates task-based learning principles and international banking scenarios to ensure that the content is practical and relevant to the participants' job roles.

RQ4: What criteria should be used to validate the study questionnaire for identifying employees' English language needs?

To ensure the validity of the study questionnaire designed to identify the English language needs of employees in the international banking and foreign exchange departments, a combination of qualitative and quantitative validation methods was employed. Content validity was established through expert

judgment, drawing on an extensive review of the literature, established needs analysis frameworks such as Target Situation Analysis (TSA) and Present Situation Analysis (PSA), and insights from actual banking practices. Subject-matter experts in both ESP and international banking were consulted to assess the relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness of the questionnaire items, which targeted essential communicative competencies such as understanding banking terminology, composing professional correspondence, and interpreting documents aligned with SWIFT, UCP, and Incoterms standards. Furthermore, the questionnaire underwent pilot testing with 30 banking officers, and their feedback informed subsequent revisions. To strengthen construct validity, exploratory factor analysis was conducted, while internal consistency was verified using statistical measures.

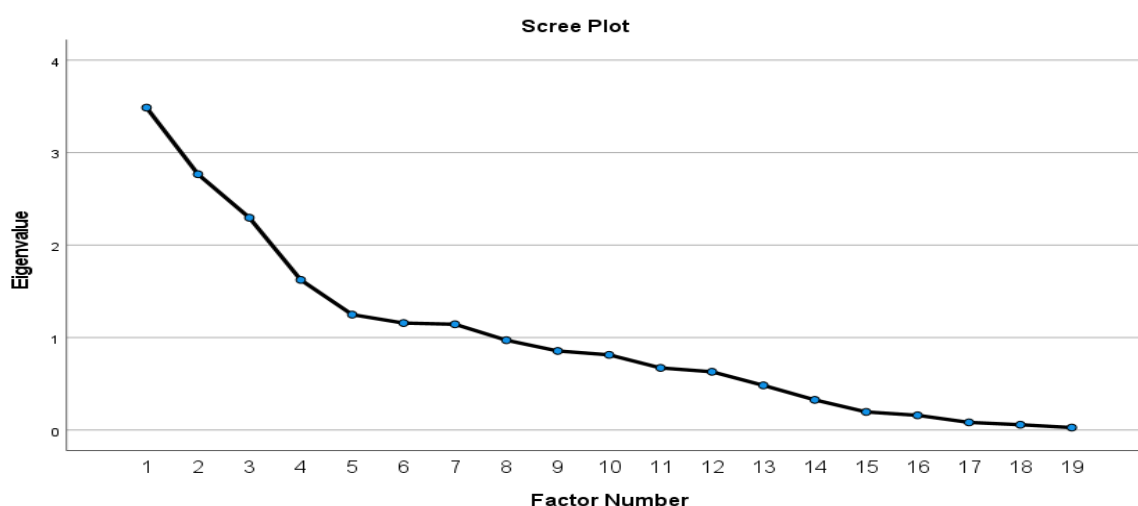
To put in other words, the questionnaire's construct validity was rigorously evaluated through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), providing strong statistical support for its effectiveness in measuring English language needs. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.605 indicated an acceptable level of sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was highly significant ($\chi^2 = 1049.812$, $p < .001$), confirming that the data was suitable for factor analysis. The rotated factor matrix revealed clear and interpretable factors with high loadings—for instance, values above .90 for several items—demonstrating distinct groupings such as proficiency-related motivation and skills-based needs.

Table 7*Analysis of KMO and Bartlett's Test*

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.605
	Approx. Chi-Square	1049.812
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df	171
	Sig.	.000

The Scree Plot further supported a three-factor solution, reinforcing the questionnaire's dimensional consistency. These findings collectively confirm that the instrument possesses

solid construct validity, making it a reliable tool for identifying English language needs within professional banking contexts.



Discussion

The findings of the present study underscore the critical importance of designing needs-based ESP syllabi tailored to the actual linguistic and professional demands of international banking officers. Drawing on both qualitative and quantitative evidence, the results revealed significant gaps in participants' proficiency, especially in reading comprehension, professional writing, and technical vocabulary. These deficiencies directly impact their performance in key banking tasks such as interpreting SWIFT messages, drafting formal correspondence, and navigating documents related to UCP 600 and Incoterms. The seven-unit ESP course developed for this study proved to be highly effective, as demonstrated by the statistically significant

improvement in the experimental group's posttest scores. This improvement affirms the centrality of needs analysis in ESP curriculum development, echoing the assertions of Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and Basturkmen (2014) that ESP instruction must be grounded in the specific communicative contexts of learners' professional domains.

Comparable international research further supports these findings. Liu and Chen (2014), in their evaluation of an ESP course for financial professionals in Taiwan, reported substantial gains in technical vocabulary acquisition and overall communicative competence. Likewise, Ko (2012) found that bank clerks in South Korea benefited most from task-based ESP instruction that closely mirrored workplace activities. Similarly, Al-Saleem (2012) identified writing and reading skills as the

most critical for Saudi bank employees, highlighting the need for tailored instruction in those areas. These studies, like the present one, highlight the positive impact of authentic materials and contextualized learning. Moreover, Khan and Nawaz (2021) emphasized the growing need for domain-specific English in digital banking in Pakistan, particularly for customer service and online communication—a trend that resonates with the increasing relevance of ICT tools in Iranian banking practices, as noted by Ghorbani and Golparvar (2020).

The implications of this research extend beyond the immediate context of Parsian Bank. The rigorous validation of the needs analysis instrument—using both expert judgment and exploratory factor analysis—demonstrates a replicable model for ESP program development in other financial institutions. The high factor loadings related to course utility, proficiency-driven motivation, and skills-based language needs reflect consistent themes found across global ESP research. Additionally, the marked improvement in the experimental group's outcomes compared to the control group underscores the pedagogical value of structured, needs-informed ESP training. Future research could explore longitudinal effects of such interventions and examine their impact on actual workplace performance. Overall, this study affirms that systematic, empirically grounded ESP course design is essential for aligning employees' linguistic capabilities with international professional standards.

Conclusion

This study highlighted the importance of designing an ESP course tailored to the specific needs of officers in the International Banking and Foreign Exchange Departments of Parsian Bank. Through a comprehensive mixed-methods approach the research revealed critical deficiencies

in English proficiency, particularly in reading comprehension, writing skills, and technical vocabulary. Factor analysis further underscored three dominant areas of concern and opportunity: (1) the practical utility of structured English language courses, (2) proficiency-driven motivation among employees to enhance workplace performance and career advancement, and (3) skills-based language needs, with an emphasis on reading, writing, and vocabulary development. These findings provided strong empirical grounding for the design of a seven-unit ESP course book focused on authentic banking tasks such as interpreting SWIFT messages, drafting formal correspondence, and understanding international trade documentation including UCP 600, Incoterms etc. The course aimed not only to bridge the identified proficiency gaps but also to empower employees with job-relevant language skills that aligned with global banking standards. The task-based nature of the syllabus ensured that learning outcomes were directly applicable to the participants' day-to-day responsibilities, increasing both relevance and engagement. Furthermore, the rigorous validation of the needs analysis instrument added methodological strength to the study and offered a replicable model for similar ESP course design initiatives in other professional contexts. In conclusion, this study highlighted the importance of grounding ESP course design in empirical needs analysis and demonstrated how such an approach could lead to meaningful, context-specific educational interventions. It was recommended that financial institutions regularly assessed the evolving language needs of their staff and invested in continuous professional development programs that targeted both general and specialized English proficiency. By doing so, they not only enhanced operational efficiency but also fostered a workforce better equipped for the

demands of global communication in the banking sector.

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