

Enhancing genre pedagogy and teacher wellbeing in ESP: Reflections from an action research

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Abstract

This study investigates an action research (AR) in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course which focuses on improving teaching methods by means of a genre pedagogy and on enhancing teacher wellbeing through a sustainable teaching environment. The paper centers on the AR's *reflective stage* where three ESP teachers, employing collaborative autoethnography, discussed teaching practices, material adaptation challenges, and implemented changes via online journals and discussions. The study aims to assess the impact of AR participation on teachers' genre pedagogy application and to understand its effects on their wellbeing. Findings suggest that reflective practices significantly increased teachers' genre pedagogy awareness and implementation, leading to a professional shift in the course. Additionally, reflections on teacher wellbeing reveal substantial stress due to large class sizes and diverse student needs, with individual teaching styles further affecting personal wellbeing and job satisfaction. The study highlights the importance of structured, reflective approaches in AR for enhancing teaching quality and teacher wellbeing.

Keywords: Action research, collaborative autoethnography (CAE), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), genre pedagogy, teacher wellbeing.

Resumen

Potenciando la pedagogía de género y el bienestar del profesorado: reflexiones desde la investigación-acción

Este estudio examina una investigación-acción en un curso de Inglés para Fines Específicos (IFE) que se centra en la mejora de los métodos de enseñanza

mediante la pedagogía de géneros y en la promoción del bienestar docente a través de un entorno de enseñanza sostenible. El artículo se enfoca en la etapa reflexiva de la investigación-acción, en la que tres profesores de IFE, usando autoetnografía colaborativa, discuten sobre prácticas docentes, desafíos en la adaptación de materiales y los cambios implementados a través de diarios en línea y debates. El estudio tiene como objetivo evaluar el impacto de la participación en la investigación-acción sobre la aplicación de la pedagogía de géneros por parte de los docentes y comprender sus efectos en su bienestar. Los resultados sugieren que las prácticas reflexivas incrementaron significativamente la conciencia y aplicación de la pedagogía de géneros por parte de los docentes, lo cual resultó en un curso más profesionalizador. Además, las reflexiones sobre el bienestar docente revelan un estrés considerable debido al elevado número de estudiantes y a las diversas necesidades del alumnado, mientras que los estilos de enseñanza individuales también influyen en el bienestar personal y la satisfacción laboral. El estudio destaca la importancia de enfoques reflexivos y estructurados en la investigación-acción para mejorar tanto la calidad de la enseñanza como el bienestar docente.

Palabras clave: Investigación-acción, autoetnografía colaborativa, Inglés para Fines Específicos (IFE), pedagogía de géneros, bienestar docente.

1. Introduction

Action Research (AR) has long been recognized as a systematic approach to improving educational practices (Davies, 2013) through iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis et al., 2014). Within language education, AR provides a framework for teachers to address specific pedagogical challenges while fostering professional growth (Burns 2009, 2019). In this study, AR was implemented to enhance two aspects. On the one hand, genre pedagogy, i.e., an approach to teaching domain-specific rhetorical and discourse types, focusing on the conventions and communicative practices from a particular discipline (Hyland, 2007, 2024). On the other hand, teacher wellbeing, i.e., the experience of positive emotions and attitudes that can lead to a sense of satisfaction with one's sense of self (McCallum & Price, 2016). Hence, this AR aimed, firstly, to improve a perceived weak teaching pedagogy by improving the quality of materials, instructions and rubrics towards a deliberate implementation of a genre pedagogy. Secondly, AR also intended to improve teacher wellbeing by promoting a psychologically sustainable teaching environment.

This study focuses on the *reflective phase* of the AR, wherein researchers engage in self-examination and reflection (Chang, 2013) using collaborative

autoethnography (CAE). CAE involves multiple authors offering diverse perspectives and constructive dialogue to enhance self-awareness and teaching efficacy (Chang, 2013). Thus, three English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers (two involved in the course and one external researcher) reflect on teaching practices, challenges and changes via journals and discussions. By integrating the authors' perspectives, this study aims (1) to comprehensively explore the impact of teachers' involvement in the AR on their awareness and utilization of genre pedagogy; and (2) to gain insights into the complex dynamics of teachers' wellbeing in the course based on their experiences and perceptions.

Therefore, the significance of this study lies in its focus on its practical and methodological contributions. By integrating AR and CAE, the study highlights the potential of reflective practices to foster pedagogical innovation and enhance teacher wellbeing, while offering insights into how collaborative reflection can support sustainable and effective teaching practices.

2. Literature review

This section reviews two key areas for improvement identified in the action research design: genre pedagogy and teacher wellbeing. This provides an overview of relevant literature before outlining the study's purpose.

2.1. Genre pedagogy in ESP

Recently, there has been increased focus on developing students' disciplinary literacies in ESP settings (Mancho-Barés & Arnó-Macià 2017; Moncada-Comas & Diert-Boté, 2022). ESP professionals immerse students in their discipline's context, socializing them into the thinking and working processes used by experts in their academic discourse community (Lyu, 2021). Hence, disciplinary literacies involve “discipline-specific speaking, listening, reading and viewing, writing and creating of verbal and multimodal texts as integral to disciplinary activities” (Zhang & Chan, 2017, p. 137).

In order to foster students' disciplinary literacies, it is crucial to create learning opportunities that enable them to understand and produce knowledge through the genres of their discipline (Hyland, 2024). A genre is “an approach to describing and understanding communication built on a

social view of language in context” (Hyland, 2024, p. 1). Genre, thus, refers to the similarities in familiar text patterns that community members can easily recognize, read, understand, and write. As Nesi and Gardner (2012) put it, “genres are abstractions” (p. 24) as they are the conventions that are realized through texts, rather than the texts themselves. Overall, genres can be classified according to the communicative purposes of the text, since they are the converging point between the discourse community and the communicative context, which influence rhetorical, linguistic and structural aspects (Flowerdew, 2020). Particularly, the focus of this paper is on genres that meet the social function of preparing students for professional practice beyond the academic sphere (Nesi & Gardner, 2012).

Accordingly, teaching genres allows students to reflect not only on the grammatical, lexical and discursive patterns of a given genre, but also on the social contexts in which they function (Hyland, 2007). The implementation of a genre-based pedagogy is specifically helpful in ESP courses (Hyon, 2018) as it is “explicit, systematic, needs-based, supportive, empowering, critical and consciousness-raising” (Hyland, 2007, p. 150). Therefore, genre-based pedagogy entails clear and *explicit* learning objectives, as well as a cohesive and *systematic* framework that integrates both language, content and contextual elements. As genre pedagogies are *needs-based*, course objectives and content are customized to meet students’ specific needs and interests, helping teachers adopt a *supportive* role by scaffolding students’ learning process. Furthermore, students are *empowered* because they can explore different patterns and possibilities in various texts while developing their *critical* thinking skills as they acquire the resources to both understand and challenge discourses. Finally, genre pedagogies contribute to *consciousness-raising* by increasing teachers’ and students’ genre awareness.

2.2. Teacher wellbeing

Teacher wellbeing is crucial for effective education but is often sidelined, necessitating empirical studies and interventions that address teachers’ psychological experiences (Mercer, 2021). The teaching profession, while often driven by vocation and passion, is demanding and can erode teachers’ purposefulness and wellbeing over time (Day, 2012). Consequently, teachers may find themselves ill-equipped to navigate complex teaching contexts, since teaching is one of the most highly anxiety-inducing occupations (Wang et al., 2022). Agyapong et al. (2022) identified high rates of burnout, stress, anxiety, and depression among teachers, which are especially acute among

language educators (Mercer, 2020). Therefore, fostering resilience (Derakhshan et al., 2024) and teacher immunity (Mousavi et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024) is essential to supporting the wellbeing of language teachers, ensuring they can thrive despite challenges.

Since wellbeing enables educators to maintain a positive balance between available resources and the challenges they face at work (Benevene et al., 2020), it is fundamental to focus on strengths in teaching (Seligman, 2011). This approach aligns with Positive Psychology, which shifts the focus from stress and burnout to factors promoting professional growth and wellbeing (Jin et al., 2021). Seligman's (2011) PERMA model, commonly applied in English language teaching wellbeing research (MacIntyre et al., 2019), envisions wellbeing as multidimensional, including subjective and social aspects, but overlooks systemic and contextual influences, treating each element individually. Oxford (2016) addresses these gaps with the EMPATHICS model, integrating individual and contextual factors within a complex systems theory, offering a holistic approach to wellbeing.

Mercer (2021) builds on this foundation by proposing an ecological perspective on teacher wellbeing. Ecological linguistics regards the classroom as a complex network of interacting organisms in and with their environment that moves beyond linear cause-effect or input-output mechanisms (van Lier, 1997). From this perspective, wellbeing can be understood as multifaceted and complex, defined as “the dynamic sense of meaning and life satisfaction emerging from a person's subjective personal relationships with the affordances within their social ecologies” (Mercer, 2021, p. 16). Thus, the author proposes an ecological perspective that considers the interplay between individual attributes, social-contextual elements, and the individual's agency within cultural, sociopolitical, institutional, interactional, and personal ecologies. As Mercer (2021) highlights, interventions should address both individual development and systemic change to avoid reductionist, individualist approaches, as emotions, in general, and wellbeing, in particular, are not the sole responsibility of the individual, but a collective one (Derakhshan et al., 2023). In our study, we embrace this ecological, complex perspective of wellbeing, considering its multidimensional nature and the dynamic interplay between individual as well as micro and macro social-contextual factors, which operate bidirectionally from within to outside and vice versa (Diert-Boté & Moncada-Comas, 2023; Korthagen, 2009). Consequently, it is essential to explore how external/internal factors interplay with teacher wellbeing in

order to understand how it is connected to teaching practices and methodologies (like genre pedagogy).

2.3. Purpose of the study

While studies highlight AR's benefits in education, a gap remains in connecting it specifically to ESP teaching contexts (Banegas, 2018; Meihami & Werbińska, 2022), due to the distinctive challenges confronted by ESP instructors: the specific teaching-learning environment, the diverse learners' needs, and the complex content and technical language. Therefore, the rationale behind this AR was twofold: (1) improving the teaching pedagogy employed in the course by enhancing the quality of materials, instructions and rubrics towards a deliberate implementation of a genre pedagogy; and (2) enhancing teacher wellbeing by providing a supportive course structure that promotes a psychologically sustainable teaching environment.

As part of the *reflective phase* of the AR, the participants-researchers actively engaged in discussions and reflections to explore the impact of the AR on the aforementioned two aspects. Accordingly, the research questions are:

1. How does teachers' participation in the AR influence their awareness and application of genre pedagogy in the ESP course?
2. What insights can be gained into the complexity of teachers' wellbeing in the ESP course, based on their experiences and perceptions?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and contexts

The study took place at Universitat Lleida (Catalonia, Spain) and analysed the experiences of two ESP teachers, Irati and Xavi. Irati holds a degree in English Studies, and successfully defended her PhD in 2021. She is a part-time lecturer also teaching tourism and medicine ESP courses. Xavi holds a degree in English Philology and a degree in Audiovisual Communication. He defended his PhD in 2011 and has taught business, tourism, physiotherapy and media ESP courses.

The ESP course analysed is "Oral and Written English for the Media", within the Audiovisual Communication and Journalism degree. This degree

is characterized by a significant number of students (over 100). After years of complaints from the ESP lecturers of the aforementioned course, in the 2023-24 academic year students were divided into two groups. Furthermore, this course underwent an important change in 2016-17 when it transitioned from an English for General Academic Purposes course offered across different disciplines to an ESP course tailored specifically for this degree. Consequently, the course underwent several changes after becoming an ESP course. Table 1 below summarizes the ESP course assessment tasks over seven academic years. Xavi taught the course alone in 2016-17, co-taught with Irati in 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2020-21, and with another lecturer in 2019-20. Finally, Irati taught alone in 2021-22 and 2022-23. Xavi coordinated the course for five years, Irati for two. Over time, nine different tasks, ranging from professionalizing to academic and general, were implemented. These changes reflected the teachers' dissatisfaction and trial-and-error efforts to find the best approach for student learning.

Academic years		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Lecturer		Xavi	Xavi + Irati	Xavi + Irati	Xavi + Other	Xavi + Irati	Irati	Irati
Course coordination		Xavi	Xavi	Xavi	Xavi	Xavi	Irati	Irati
Tasks	Type							
subtitling	professionalizing	yes					no	
essay (quoting & referencing)	academic	yes			no			
genre theory	academic	yes				no		
language policy	academic	yes				no		
oral test	general	yes			no			
video presentation	general	no			yes	no		
film review	professionalizing	yes						
interview	professionalizing	no				yes		
profile article	professionalizing	no				yes		

Table 1. Overview of ESP course from 2016 to 2023.

3.2. Research design: Action research

This study adopted an AR design to improve the course's pedagogical approach and teacher wellbeing. AR entails embracing a problematizing stance and adopting a self-reflective and critical approach to explore one's own teaching context (Burns, 2009). According to Burns, "problematizing" one's teaching practices implies identifying areas that could be improved through critical examination, and subsequently generating new, more effective alternatives (Davies, 2013). Hence, AR is assigned a "transformative

power” to update and improve teaching approaches, to better comprehend students’ needs and to gain richer insights of who teachers are as teachers (Pine, 2009).

Although AR allows for flexibility and adaptability (Burns, 2019), it is usually characterized by four main steps that follow an iterative cycle (Kemmis et al., 2014): planning, action, observation and reflection. Although Xavi and Irati engaged in some planning, action, and reflection from 2016 to 2020, a formal AR process was not implemented until 2021-23 by Irati. Thus, in the *planning* phase, Irati identified two problems: (1) a perceived ineffective genre pedagogy because of an unsuccessful integration of professionalizing genres in the ESP course; and (2) low levels of teacher wellbeing stemming from this inefficient pedagogy. To address these issues, in the *action* phase, Irati developed a more explicit genre pedagogy to implement in 2021-22 (and improved it in 2022-23): teaching materials leading more logically to the final task/genre and new genre’s instructions, rubrics and models. As part of the LIDISELF project (a three-year research-project which explored how genres can develop students’ disciplinary literacies), the *observation* phase involved collecting classroom documents (PowerPoints, rubrics, instructions), students’ submissions (genres produced through assessed tasks), the teacher’s feedback, and the students’ course satisfaction survey results. Finally, the *reflection* stage (the focus of this paper) implemented a CAE with Irati, Xavi and Balbina (external researcher) to reflect on Irati’s teaching practices and evaluate her plan of action with other colleagues.

3.3. Data collection: Collaborative autoethnography

CAE aimed to reflect on teaching practices, evaluate genre pedagogy’s effectiveness, and explore factors affecting teacher wellbeing. The benefit of this approach is that authors can consider another level of intersubjectivity, as researchers-participants are encouraged to listen to each other, analyze their own assumptions, and question other perspectives (Chang, 2013). Autoethnographic data can give the researchers-participants “snapshots” of their memories about the topic being researched (Muncey, 2010).

Data were collected both orally, through two online discussions (totaling 5 hours) and a 2-hour face-to-face discussion, and in written form via two journals by Irati and Xavi. The online discussions were recorded via Google Meet with all three authors. The first discussion (Dis1) on 15th March 2023 focused on the course and gathered initial perspectives from the teachers,

while also creating a chronological view of the course's evolution. The second discussion (Dis2) on 25th May 2023 occurred after Irati and Xavi finished their journals, allowing for deeper exploration of topics needing clarification. The third face-to-face meeting (Dis3) on 24th July 2023 involved analysing the previous discussions. Balbina's role in the discussions was pivotal in encouraging reflection by providing an external perspective that challenged assumptions and offered fresh insights.

Regarding the journals, a total of 8,729 words were gathered during the months of April and May. Journals from a first-person perspective were used to capture personal reflections on language teaching and/or learning. These journals (J-Irati and J-Xavi) gave them the opportunity to recall and ponder on their teaching practices and emotions in relation to the ESP course, thus evoking "memories about critical events, people, places, behaviors, talks, thoughts, perspectives, opinions, and emotions pertaining to the research topic" (Chang, 2013, p. 113).

Finally, the last data set is the results obtained in the official students' course satisfaction surveys, confidentially administered by the university so that students can assess the course and the teacher's teaching performance.

3.4. Data analysis

Qualitative content analysis was adopted to tackle the dynamic and complex nature of emotional aspects (wellbeing) and pedagogical perceptions of a genre approach. Content analysis allows researchers to make "replicable and valid inferences from text (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). This methodology facilitates the exploration of participants' understandings of the social world, particularly their teaching experience, and how these impact their professional wellbeing.

Krueger's (1994) five stages of content analysis were followed: (1) familiarization with the data to acquire a general understanding of the topics; (2) identification of significant extracts related to genre pedagogy and teacher wellbeing; (3) transcription of discussions (see Table 2), labelling and translation of important excerpts; (4) reorganization of data and categorization of quotes to aid comprehension; and (5) interpreting and establishing connections across data to develop a comprehensive analysis of the phenomena.

Symbol	Function
[word]	Added words for clarification
{word}	Speaker's quotations
[...]	Omission
?	Rising intonation

Table 2. Transcription conventions.

4. Findings

In this section, the steps taken over time to improve genre pedagogy (section 4.1) and the ESP lecturers' own wellbeing (section 4.2) will be explored considering the reflections derived from the discussions and the journals.

4.1. Genre pedagogy

The evolution of the implementation of a genre pedagogy has been slow and gradual over time, taking several academic years to implement a well-thought, effective genre pedagogy in the ESP course. Thanks to Balbina's external perspective, Irati and Xavi became aware of one of the limitations of the subject, i.e., the lack of a professionalizing purpose:

- (1) One thing I've noticed and I wasn't aware of, and you pointed it out, is this clear initial fact that the subject was about oral language but not professionalizing (Xavi, Dis1).

This excerpt shows that the CAE reflection has been eye-opening for the participants-researchers. In fact, thanks to these discussions, Xavi mentions that it seems "logical" (Dis1) to choose professionalizing genres in an ESP course. Furthermore, Irati reflects on the main problem of adopting a more professionalizing approach along the years, which is the lack of communication between ESP teachers and experts in the field:

- (2) The problem we had to get where we're now is that, for example, LIDISELF [...] has helped me a lot, but it's this unfamiliarity, this lack of support [...] we don't have anyone telling us {don't do this} [...] there should be communication among the degree [teachers] (Irati, Dis1).

Another difficulty to professionalize the course that emerged in Dis3 was the challenge to select appropriate and relevant genres for the two disciplines of the degree: audiovisual communication (e.g., screenplay) and journalism (e.g., piece of news). Both Irati and Xavi agreed that they wished to adopt an

inclusive approach that considered both fields, but there are students that are only interested in one discipline. Therefore, it is difficult to satisfy all students' needs and interests.

Although both teachers see the benefits of a genre pedagogy, there are certain discrepancies about how they understand their role as ESP teachers. It is clear from the discussions that Xavi believes that an ESP course can benefit from general English language tasks, even if they are not completely professionalizing, as for him the role of English teacher is more predominant than the ESP role:

- (3) The fact that it's professionalizing is important [...] but not to the extent of overriding that in the end we are English teachers (Xavi, Dis3).

After this third discussion, Xavi also further reflected on his journal about his role as English language teacher in the ESP course:

- (4) We're language teachers who want them to produce in English to help them talk and write better and [...] to improve their specialized vocabulary and maybe learn a few content things on the side. But content is never the main goal (J-Xavi).

Regarding content, both Irati and Xavi agree that the ESP course should not be too theoretical. In the past, Xavi used to prioritize very specific, usually advanced content for 1st-year students (from 2016-17 to 2019-20). Indeed, Irati wondered: "is ESP a subject to teach certain content? Because it was very content-based" (Dis2). Along the discussions, Xavi admits that abstract theoretical concepts are more suitable for higher levels: "I quitted focusing on theory because it was hard for students" (Dis2). Similarly, Irati complains that she had to reinvent the course because the previous years "[students] did not practice, it was theoretical, [tasks] were focused on theory" (Dis2). This was because Xavi was "more interested in students learning to distinguish genres rather than to execute them" (Dis1).

After reflecting about the changes of the course throughout the years 2016-20, Irati focused on the specific adjustments implemented for her AR and the impact that they had. The first big pedagogical transformation was in 2020-21 when Irati suggested following a specialized coursebook for the media (Ceramella & Lee, 2008). Although the book did not follow a genre-based approach, it provided a structured division of content that served as a starting point:

- (5) We adopted a specialized book, old as hell, from 2008, but we talked and decided that we needed to do something more structured and really audiovisual-oriented (Irati, Dis1).

Although this change enabled both teachers to provide a more organized content, they complained about the fact that it was too old as no newer editions have been published, thus questioning its usefulness. This was the inspiring seed for Irati to embark on her own AR to develop a more purposeful and cohesive genre pedagogy. She comments the following on the last two academic years:

- (6) All the contents are designed for the final task, they aren't disconnected. Sometimes in the past I had the feeling that students were a bit distracted because I told them {you have to do this} but we didn't give them instructions or do preparatory activities in class [...] and I guess the fact that I have adapted the level has also changed [the course] (Irati, Dis1).

As Irati also mentioned before, her AR also benefited from LIDISELF, as it helped her “see the importance of giving good instructions, of working on the rubrics in class [...] they even used the rubrics to assess their classmates” (Dis1). In the end, thanks to reflecting on the issues of the course and implementing these changes, Irati concluded:

- (7) I like [the course] a lot because it's been the first year I could create the dossier. I could reuse activities from the book, but I've also created new ones [...] this year has been the first one that I've had it well tied up because each unit has a genre as a final product (Irati, Dis1).

This statement shows that Irati considered that her AR had been successful in implementing a self-perceived effective genre pedagogy. Moreover, this was reflected in the student opinion surveys, as in the last course (2022-23) the subject received the highest score since the course started to be implemented back in 2016-17 (see Figure 1).

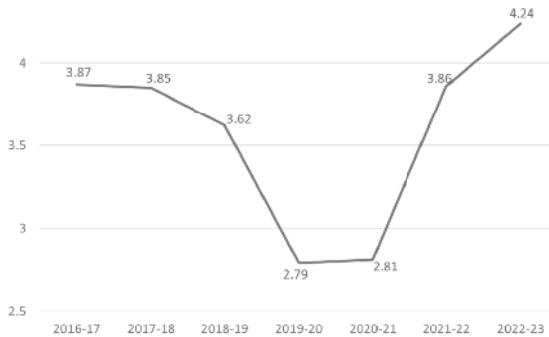


Figure 1. Subject score evolution.

As shown in the figure, the average score for the subject during the first three years was 3.78 out of 5, which was quite a positive result. Nevertheless, there was a plunge in the next two years that coincided with one teacher changing (see Table 1) in 2019-20, and with the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-21. The last two academic years, with Irati being the only teacher, students' overall satisfaction improved, as they mentioned in the students' satisfaction surveys of 2022-23 that classes were "dynamic and participative", and the activities were "varied and entertaining"; even one student added that it was "an excellent formative methodology".

Figure 2 below illustrates the initial challenges faced in the course and the transition towards a more structured and professionalized approach, largely driven by the AR.

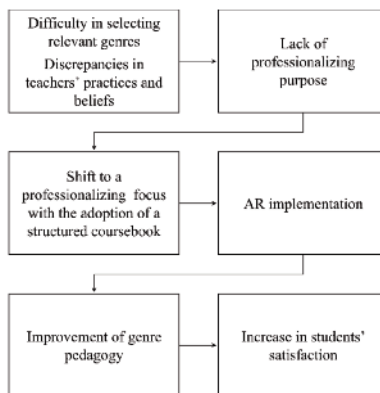


Figure 2. Transition towards an enhanced genre pedagogy.

4.2. Teacher-wellbeing

Following Mercer's (2021) ecological perspective about wellbeing, the findings in this section are divided into contextual and individual aspects that affect teacher wellbeing.

4.2.1. Contextual wellbeing

Contextual factors appeared to be crucial in how both teachers felt regarding the ESP course:

- (8) In this contextual and institutional wellbeing we're very much in line because both of us have faced the same situations, and I think we have a very similar discourse (Irati, Dis2).

The main problem that both teachers "faced" was the large number of students, which affected both teacher and student wellbeing, as Xavi pointed that the situation was "an aberration" and that it would have been strange to have "happy students" with so many people in class (Dis2). Having so many students affected teacher wellbeing in various ways. Firstly, there was a wide range of English language levels (from A1 to C1), which had an evident impact on the teaching pedagogy. Therefore, providing ad hoc, personalized instruction to too many students was excessively demanding. Furthermore, students with higher levels could get bored, whereas lower ones could find it too challenging:

- (9) They leave you with a subject with 100 students and you have to get on with it, and the crappy thing is that if all had a B1 level, awesome [...] but the problem is that you have B1s, B2s and C1s (Xavi, Dis2).

It is interesting to notice that, despite the adverse contextual circumstances, Irati (and also Xavi in the past) were determined to "sacrifice" themselves by working more for students' sake:

- (10) I'm willing to sacrifice myself if I see that it's worth it because I think that it's useful for students, but sacrificing myself just for the sake of sacrificing, to do whatever, I'm not gonna bother, but my duty as a teacher is to correct and to give quality feedback [...] I do my best (Irati, Dis2).
- (11) At first I sacrificed viability. I failed because I didn't take into account what having 100 students implies. I became aware with time that it

wasn't viable [...] that's why I got burned out, because the number of hours that I devoted to the subject is mind-blowing (Xavi, Dis1).

One of such sacrifices involved correcting many assignments (especially in the course 2022-23, in which a new task was added):

- (12) It was a real pain having to correct 400 tasks, obviously, but I thought that they wouldn't have so many opportunities during the degree to practice their English well [...] and receive correct feedback (Irati, Dis2).
- (13) Most of the unhappy students' complaints were {you haven't corrected enough, I've done things but I don't have your feedback}, and my answer always was {I can't because I cannot go through them all}. This is frustrating [...] {if I correct your assignment and the other 99, I won't have a life} (Xavi, Dis2).

Xavi further emphasized that, apart from correcting, another contextual constraint was the impossibility of making students "equally individualized and appreciated" (Dis2). All these institutional factors inevitably led to teachers' exhaustion:

- (14) It's exhausting both in and out of class. I'm exhausted in these classes [...] how can I push myself more? During the whole class I don't know how many steps I take, up and down, in front of the class, at the back, looking around, calling students' attention, shouting. Will I end up losing my voice? [...] It's very exhausting (Irati, Dis2).

Finally, another institutional problem of the course is related to the overall degree, as there is only one ESP course that aims to improve their English level to B1, as Xavi explained:

- (15) [The degree coordinator] doesn't think of an itinerary, a path, a career profile, nothing. He leaves the subject in the first semester asking for a B1 [...] the problem comes from here, he could have said {let's ask for a B1 as a minimum but let's push them to get a B2 to prepare them for English-medium instruction subjects} (Xavi, Dis2).

Unavoidably, these unfavourable situations resulted in a shared feeling of "frustration":

- (16) You feel frustrated, totally. Unhappy student, unhappy teacher, and the other way round (Irati, Dis2).

- (17) My frustration was that I've been devoting time to thinking about the task and looking for a decent way to give them feedback and what I expected was {thank you for this innovation} and what I had was {this sucks, you have only given my audio a quick listen}, so then you say {go to hell} (Xavi, Dis2).

Nevertheless, despite these negative feelings, both teachers always attempted to surpass all the hurdles to improve the teaching/learning experiences of both stakeholders.

- (18) I think that the reason for walking this path has been to try and find our balance [...] we are resilient (Irati, Dis1).

4.2.2. Individual wellbeing

Both Irati and Xavi actively contributed to enhancing the effectiveness and enjoyment of the course for students in their unique approaches. Thanks to CAE, what Irati and Xavi discovered is that they are teachers (and individuals) with very different personal traits and beliefs, and, thus, their individual wellbeing also differs.

The biggest difference in personal traits between Irati and Xavi is in relation to the level of preparation for the class each one finds appropriate. On the one hand, Irati says about herself:

- (19) I feel more comfortable, happier, when everything's more prepared, more square [...] obviously there's always room for discussions and to improvise, but in general, I'm like this (Irati, Dis2).

Conversely, Irati sees Xavi as prioritizing “freedom, improvisation and adapting to the students” (Dis2). As Xavi himself puts it:

- (20) I enjoyed it when you could improvise, when you could take students' interest and talents into account, and just get them to go further and explore new things. The way we're being asked to plan courses turns us into machines (Xavi, Dis2).

When Xavi was the course coordinator, he emphasized choosing tasks he found enjoyable and selected complex materials with the hope that students would push themselves to understand them and go beyond the basics required. But when Irati started teaching the course, she recounts the following:

- (21) The materials were more complex and advanced [...] I think students found it harder to follow. I remember that we read papers and we taught much more theory and complex concepts like language policy or vocal hygiene for radio/tv presenters (J-Irati).

The inclusion of complex theoretical aspects in the course can be explained by the fact that, while Xavi had been teaching in higher education for several years, Irati was new to the profession. Therefore, at the time, she did not even think of proposing changes, partly because she was new to the job, partly because of a tendency to be obedient. Thus, there is a noteworthy distinction in the personality traits and beliefs of Irati and Xavi that relate to their individual wellbeing. While Irati exhibits a predisposition towards adherence to established norms, Xavi gravitates towards an opposing stance:

- (22) I think that because of my personality, or how I've been raised, I've always been very obedient, I've always done what I've been told (Irati, Dis2).
- (23) You try to find unofficial practices to have less students. When I created Group C [more advanced], I honestly believed that they were the ones that should complain because I literally got rid of them and, in fact, someone complained (Xavi, Dis1).

Therefore, Xavi embraces the notion that the end justifies the means, which prompted him to actively seek creative solutions for the problem posed by having to teach so many students with various proficiency levels. One of these solutions was the creation of Group C, which did not receive English language classes and was asked to perform more complex tasks, so students eventually complained. Although these decisions did not pose a problem for Xavi, the lack of structure in the materials used and the unofficial nature of these solutions did have a negative impact on Irati's wellbeing. Hence, Irati eventually followed her own path by embarking on a genre pedagogy approach that could help her organize the course more effectively and, in turn, increase her wellbeing.

Despite the notable difference in Irati and Xavi's personalities and beliefs, it is fundamental to note that these are not fixed, but might change over time. Thus, although Irati may tend towards obedience, she has been teaching for several years now, and she would no longer uncritically implement material that she regards as inadequate:

- (24) Now that I have some years of expertise and I think more critically, now I can finally say {yes to this, no to this}. Maybe [in the past] I unconsciously adopted this role of {I'm the one who knows nothing, I've just landed here and I'll do as I'm told and that's it} (Irati, Dis2).

On the other hand, Xavi has realized that providing detailed and accurate instructions is very important, something he tended to disregard in previous years:

- (25) I'm aware that, over the years, observing Irati's style, reading about genre pedagogy [...] I have improved in being more clear in my instructions, paying more attention to detail (spelling mistakes, taking aesthetical elements into account, etc.). I was really bad at that, but mostly because I didn't give it the right amount of attention (J-Xavi).

Due to their distinct personality traits and individual wellbeing, Xavi rejected the possibility of co-teaching this course again with Irati in 2023-24. The reason was the belief that he would not enjoy the course and would struggle teaching it in the new structured genre pedagogy format, putting his individual wellbeing at stake. As he explained, Irati had prepared highly effective teaching materials that certainly played a role in boosting student satisfaction, and, as the course coordinator, she also had the task of making sure everything ran smoothly, applying only minor changes to her genre pedagogy.

Overall, Figure 3 below presents the key contextual and individual factors identified in the data that affect teacher wellbeing, depicting both institutional constraints and personal traits that shape the overall teaching experience.

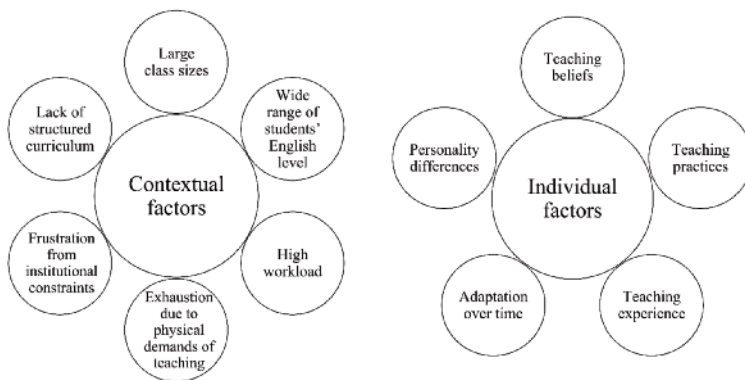


Figure 3. Summary of contextual and individual factors.

5. Discussion

As part of an AR and through CAE, this study has sought to gain insights into the participants-researchers' awareness and application of a genre-based approach, while also delving into the complex landscape of their professional wellbeing.

Regarding RQ1, one significant impact of the AR noted in the findings is the increased awareness among these ESP teachers regarding the crucial role that professionalizing genres play in ESP (Hyland, 2007; Nesi & Gardner, 2012). Their reflections exemplify a critical shift from a general English focus towards a more specialized, professionalizing intent in ESP teaching. Nevertheless, it appears that awareness of genre pedagogy alone may not suffice for its implementation, as identity beliefs also seem influential. While one teacher readily embraced the role of an ESP lecturer (see Meihami & Werbińska, 2022), the other maintained a core identity as a general English teacher, viewing the ESP role as more peripheral (Korthagen, 2009). This underlines that teaching decisions are influenced not only by external factors like the type of course or familiarity with specific teaching methodologies, but also by internal aspects like professional identity, which also plays a crucial role (Diert-Boté & Moncada-Comas, 2023; Korthagen, 2009).

The findings highlight several challenges in implementing the ESP course, including challenges in designing courses for heterogeneous groups and the unavailability of materials suited to the specific context (Flowerdew, 2010). The scarcity of up-to-date and relevant materials was a recurrent theme in our study. In fact, this issue is widespread and often forces teachers to create their own material, which demands significant time and effort (Aniroh, 2019). This is particularly relevant when teachers lack specific subject content expertise (Derakhshan et al., 2023), as reported by Irati. Furthermore, since teachers were responsible for developing the materials themselves, they sometimes struggled to align the content's difficulty with the students' actual knowledge level. Nonetheless, when designing ESP courses, it is crucial that the content is realistic (Caplan & Johns, 2022) and that its difficulty is appropriately matched to the academic level of the learners' content-based courses (Aniroh, 2019).

The findings also reflect the challenges of implementing genre pedagogy without the support of disciplinary content experts. This interdisciplinary approach emerged as crucial in the discussions, underscoring the necessity for collaboration between language and content specialists (Mancho-Barés &

Aguilar-Pérez, 2020; Mancho-Barés & Arnó-Macià, 2017). While content experts benefit from the linguistic insights of language professionals in English-medium instruction (Mancho-Barés & Aguilar-Pérez, 2020), language experts similarly require the expertise of content specialists to stay connected with the developments in the specialized fields (Gollin-Kies et al., 2015).

Furthermore, findings reveal the “transformative power” of AR (Pine, 2009) when implemented explicitly. This study has shown that the teachers were taking a lot of “actions” without a clear focus before the AR, so their approach was incomplete and not fully effective (Kemmis et al., 2014). Therefore, although there were a lot of changes along the years, these did not problematize a specific aspect of their teaching practices in a structured way (Burns, 2009). However, thanks to the AR, Irati particularly started to gain awareness of her own teaching practices and how she could draw on genre pedagogy to improve them. Hence, her pedagogical changes had a clear focus since she was addressing a particular problem while deeply reflecting on it (Burns, 2009; Davies, 2013).

These revisions of the subject led to working on a genre pedagogy that implemented professional genres of the field to avoid non-specialized, artificial and decontextualized tasks (Caplan & Johns, 2022) and to develop clearer genre instructions, scaffolding activities, and more suitable rubrics. Thus, thanks to the AR, the course appears to enculturate students more efficiently into their discipline (Bhatia, 2017), evidenced by the improved students’ course satisfaction survey results. This finding resonates with Banegas (2018), whose AR helped to produce more authentic materials focused on both the subject matter and language-awareness activities, which increased students’ motivation. Overall, this genre pedagogy has empowered the teacher “by offering [her] ways to analyze texts, to reflect on the workings of language, and to provide more robust and targeted support for learners” (Hyland, 2007, p. 162).

Regarding RQ2, discussions have contributed to increasing the participants-researchers’ awareness of their own teacher wellbeing by identifying several aspects, both contextual-institutional and individual, that influence their wellbeing from an ecological perspective (Derakhshan et al., 2024; Mercer, 2021; Oxford, 2016).

Contextual factors include the large number of students with varying English levels, two disciplines coexisting in the same degree without a clear

itinerary, and, overall, a heavy workload –which is one of the most common teacher stressors (MacIntyre et al., 2019). In contrast with Nazari et al. (2020), who found low levels of burnout among EAP teachers, our findings reveal negative emotions like frustration, exhaustion, and burnout (see Mousavi et al., 2024, for similar results). This is partially explained by the teachers’ struggle to provide quality, personalized feedback –a critical yet challenging aspect due to time constraints (Šarmanová & Kostolányová, 2015)– while simultaneously managing their own wellbeing needs. Given the demanding nature of ESP contexts, the needs of ESP teachers require thorough study (Basturkmen, 2019). As findings show, their commitment in their professional responsibilities, combined with challenging situations that entail personal sacrifice, highlight a critical tension between ideal pedagogical goals and practical viability.

Despite these common systemic constraints, findings also highlight the uniqueness of teacher wellbeing (McCallum & Price, 2016), and how it is closely linked to a sense of agency in pedagogical practices and decisions (Mercer, 2021). Whilst one of the teachers selected activities and genres that he enjoyed –emphasizing spontaneity and freedom as crucial elements in his classes– the other opted for more structured and organized course materials that granted a greater sense of purpose and control, which increased her confidence and wellbeing. Although these personal characteristics provide a sense of fixedness, findings also emphasize the “dynamic stability” (Mercer, 2015) of wellbeing, as there is always room for potential growth over time. Therefore, AR facilitates the exploration and enhancement of the problems found in ESP practice, so a teacher that decides to embark in the AR journey “is on the way to becoming a well-qualified ESP teacher” (Chen, 2000, p. 399).

6. Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the implementation of genre pedagogy within ESP teaching while ensuring teacher wellbeing. The findings demonstrate that AR plays a crucial role in fostering awareness and improving teaching practices. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of acknowledging individual differences in teacher wellbeing and the need for ongoing reflection and support in the teaching profession.

Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge the study’s limitations. Firstly, being an autoethnographic study, the data were self-reported (based on the

participants' perceptions and experiences) and from a small sample size of only two teachers. Secondly, it was not possible to analyze the actual impact of the AR on the students' performance, as this aspect fell beyond the scope of our study. Therefore, future research could, on the one hand, expand the scope by gathering data from diverse contexts to allow for comparative analysis and a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges ESP teachers face in order to support their wellbeing. On the other hand, exploring students' perspectives and collecting data on their performance would provide revealing findings into how the teacher's implementation of genre pedagogy influences their learning outcomes.

This study yields multifaceted implications. Firstly, it underscores the potential of AR (Pine, 2009) as an effective methodology for testing new pedagogies like genre pedagogy in an ESP course (Banegas, 2018; Chen, 2000; Meihami & Werbińska, 2022), ultimately benefiting the teaching and learning experience. Secondly, it also underlines that strategies aimed at enhancing teacher wellbeing should consider individual variations, due to its unique nature. Finally, this paper emphasizes the need for educators to reflect on their own and their co-workers' wellbeing, and to share emotions, opinions and pedagogical practices to improve their own wellbeing and to help build competences to cope and thrive in their careers (Agyapong et al., 2022).

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