

Using Project-Based Learning to Improve English for Specific Purposes Students' Business Writing, Negotiation, and Persuasion Skills

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Abstract

This study is intended to measure the effect of using project-based learning (PBL) to improve English for specific purposes (ESP) students' business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills. A quasi-experimental pre-post control group design was employed to achieve the study objectives. Ninety second-year students from the Sadat Academy for Management Sciences (Minia Branch) were randomly selected during the second semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. These students were divided into two intact groups of (45) students each. The experimental group underwent training via a project-based learning program to improve their business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills. In contrast, the control group received regular instruction. Three instruments were used to achieve the study's goals: a needs assessment questionnaire to identify the essential ESP business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills, a business writing skills test, and a negotiation and persuasion skills test. Data analysis using a t-test revealed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the post-test performance of the control group. The study presents results, new recommendations, and further suggestions for upcoming research.

Keywords; Project-Based Learning, Business writing, Negotiation, and Persuasion skills

Introduction:

Business writing is a specialized form of writing that aims at conveying information in a professional context. It encompasses various forms of communication, including emails, reports, proposals, memos, and other documents

that facilitate business operations. The primary goal of business writing is to communicate ideas clearly, concisely, and effectively to achieve specific objectives, such as informing, instructing, persuading, or collaborating with others.

Guffey and Loewy (2021) stated that effective business writing includes clarity, brevity, coherence, and a focus on the audience's needs. It often involves a formal tone and precise language to ensure that the message is understood and taken seriously. Additionally, business writing should be well-structured, with a logical flow of information and appropriate formatting to enhance readability. In today's fast-paced business environment, strong business writing skills are essential for successful communication and can significantly impact an organization's efficiency, reputation, and overall success. Whether crafting an email to a colleague or drafting a strategic business plan, mastering business writing techniques can help professionals convey their messages more effectively and achieve their intended outcomes.

Heydari and Danai (2015) mentioned that negotiation skills are essential for reaching agreements that satisfy all parties involved. These skills involve preparation, gathering information, and understanding the interests and goals of both parties. It also includes active listening, paying attention to the other party's perspective, and showing empathy. Clear communication is important, which means articulating one's position clearly and effectively. Additionally, problem-solving is crucial, as it involves identifying common ground and developing creative solutions that benefit all parties.

Persuasive skills as stated by Ciortescu (2020) are essential in business writing as they enable individuals to convince others to take desired actions or adopt specific viewpoints.

These skills involve understanding the audience and knowing their needs, interests, and concerns to tailor the message effectively. They also require building credibility, establishing trust and authority on the subject matter, presenting arguments logically, and supporting them with evidence, as well as engaging the audience emotionally to make the message more compelling.

According to Baber, et al (2020), the integration of business writing, negotiation, and persuasive, skills can significantly enhance professional effectiveness. For instance, a well-written proposal that clearly outlines benefits and addresses potential concerns can be a powerful persuasive tool in negotiations. Similarly, strong negotiation skills can improve the ability to write compelling business communications that anticipate and address potential objections.

In contemporary language education, innovative instructional approaches are increasingly sought to address the specialized needs of learners in specific professional domains. One such approach gaining prominence is Project-Based Learning (PBL). It offers a dynamic framework for engaging students in authentic, real-world tasks that enhance their language proficiency and practical skills.

Project-based learning (PBL) is a teaching pedagogy that emphasizes students' active roles in learning and involves them in collaborative projects that are designed to mimic real-world problems (Thomas, 2021). With PBL, students actively participate in solving problems, thinking critically, and applying knowledge, which helps them better understand and remember language skills (Huang, 2019). This approach not only helps learners improve their

language abilities but also cultivates important soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and adaptability, all of which are indispensable for success in today's interconnected business world.

Ramadhani et al. (2019) stated that during Project-Based Learning (PBL), students often practice business writing as part of their projects. This may include creating proposals, reports, emails, and presentations. Engaging in business writing as part of PBL helps students develop skills such as clarity, brevity, audience awareness, and maintaining a professional tone. Adapting writing to different audiences, like peers, instructors, or external stakeholders, is essential for effective communication. By integrating business writing into PBL, students can refine and enhance these skills within a real-world context, preparing them for professional environments where such writing is vital.

Negotiation skills are essential in PBL because students frequently collaborate in teams and need to negotiate roles, responsibilities, and approaches for their projects. Project-based learning is effective in fostering negotiation skills through conflict resolution, consensus building, and active listening. It provides students with real-world negotiation experience, which enhances their capacity to negotiate effectively in their future professional endeavors (Wood, et al. 2023).

Persuasive skills are an integral component of PBL. Students frequently need to advocate for their ideas, whether they are presenting their project to an audience, pitching their solution to a panel, or persuading their team of a specific approach. PBL aids students in developing persuasive skills through:

1. Argumentation: Using logic and reasoning to support their claims.
2. Evidence-Based

Persuasion: Employing data and research to validate their arguments and enhance their persuasiveness. 3. Emotional Appeal: Captivating their audience emotionally to make their message more meaningful .By honing their persuasive abilities within the framework of PBL, students improve their capacity to influence and sway others, a pivotal skill in professional and business environments (Alotaibi, 2020) The incorporation of business writing, negotiation, and persuasive skills through PBL equips students with the requirements of today's workplace. By working on projects, students not only acquire knowledge in their respective fields but also cultivate vital communication and interpersonal abilities. This comprehensive approach to learning guarantees that students are well-prepared to tackle intricate tasks and work together effectively in their future professions (Pennell, et al, 2009).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses are personalized to suit the linguistic and communicative demands of students within specialized fields such as business, engineering, or healthcare (Sirisrimangkorn, 2021). Unlike general language education, ESP focuses on equipping students with the language skills necessary to function effectively within their professional contexts. Proficiency in ESP involves mastering domain-specific vocabulary, discourse conventions, and communication strategies that are directly applicable to workplace scenarios.

Influential communication lies at the heart of successful business interactions, requiring proficiency in various language skills tailored to specific business contexts. Business writing entails the ability to compose clear, concise, and persuasive documents such as emails, reports,

and proposals that convey professionalism and clarity (Hyland, 2016). Negotiation skills involve the art of reaching mutually beneficial agreements through effective communication and strategic persuasion. Persuasion skills, on the other hand, are essential for influencing stakeholders' attitudes and decisions through compelling arguments and rhetoric (Perloff, 2021). Therefore, the present research is an attempt to explore the effect of using Project-Based Learning to improve (ESP) students' competencies in business writing, negotiation, and persuasion key skills essential for effective communication in global business environments.

Literature review and previous studies

Theories Underpinning PBL

Project-based learning (PBL) is an instructional approach that promotes the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills through immersive, engaging experiences. This methodology is rooted in several educational theories and principles:

Constructivism:

Constructivism suggests that learners build their insights and knowledge of the surrounding world by experiencing and reflecting on those experiences. In PBL, students actively participate in real-world, meaningful projects, which strengthens their capacity to construct knowledge. (Vygotsky & Cole 2018).

Experiential Learning

As proposed by Kolb et al (2014), experiential learning theory emphasizes learning through experience. PBL allows students to sightsee difficulties and contests that have real-life applications, thus making learning more relevant and meaningful.

- **Inquiry-Based Learning**

This is centered around students' questions, ideas, and analyses. PBL promotes a deep level of inquiry, as students must ask questions, investigate solutions, and develop answers as part of their projects.

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's theory sheds light on the necessity of observing, modeling, and imitating the performances, attitudes, and emotional responses of others. PBL often involves collaborative projects, where students learn from each other and work together to achieve common goals.

Project-Based Learning and Authentic Learning

Authentic learning involves tasks that are relevant and meaningful to the learner. Project-Based Learning (PBL) focuses on real-world challenges and problems, making the learning process more engaging and applicable to students' lives. PBL involves students working on a complex problem or challenge over an extended period. This approach gives students the chance to be deeply involved with content, cooperate with peers, and apply knowledge in practical contexts.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) requires students to work together on a project with clearly stated objectives. Supporters of PBL claim that it is an effective method for increasing student participation and helping them gain the skills needed to succeed in a rapidly changing world. While PBL is gaining popularity in schools, there is still ongoing discussion about its impact. Advocates argue that it improves student involvement and academic success, while critics question its ability to enhance student motivation, build subject knowledge, and prepare students with essential 21st-century skills (Sulistiyani, 2018).

Villalba (2022) investigated the use of online tools in EFL occupational training. The study involved a technology-focused project carried out during 2017-2018 with students in the "Business English" course. This project aimed to improve students' written abilities via blogging, employing a project-based learning (PBL) approach. The chief objective was to explore the efficiency of blogging within the PBL framework in English for specific purposes courses, predominantly focusing on whether technology can enhance FL learning in both official and direct occupational training. Grounded on the experiment's results, the study aimed to provide insights for future best teaching practices, helping educators integrate blogging into their classrooms. This approach would apply not only to direct training but also to distance and hybrid education. The study emphasized the significance of collaborative and team learning through using PBL.

In 2021, Tuyen & Tien conducted a study on how students perceive the integration of (PBL) into (ESP) courses at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology (HUTECH). The research included 64 fourth-year students and revealed that incorporating PBL presented more advantages than challenges. It was observed that students enhanced their language skills, gained industry-specific competencies, cultivated self-accountability, and experienced an increase in motivation. The difficulties encountered mainly revolved around peer-related issues. The study aimed to contribute to the existing knowledge in the field and emphasize the significance of PBL in ESP education at HUTECH and more broadly in Vietnamese tertiary education.

Emery (2021) described (PBL) as an educational approach that enthusiastically involves students in actual learning. It is gaining popularity in (EFL) teaching centers and

universities in Vietnam, demonstrating its effectiveness in improving both English language proficiency and soft skills among students studying (ESP). Although PBL is undeniably effective, it is considered a complement to, rather than a replacement for, traditional teaching methods. Huang (2019) proposed that incorporating simulation techniques into project-based learning can be highly advantageous. In this research, the focus was on students' encounters within a simulated business setting. Fifty-one 2nd and 3rd year students participated in a Business English elective class at a private university in central Taiwan. They reenacted an episode of *The Apprentice*, devising plans to market beverages to their fellow students on campus using English. Feedback from questionnaires and interviews revealed that students perceived the course as more engaging, interactive, and applicable compared to traditional business courses. Furthermore, the study indicated that the project facilitated social interaction and provided a secure team environment, promoting collaborative efforts and the acquisition of synergistic knowledge.

Elements and Benefits of PBL

According to Leggett and Harrington (2021), problem-based learning (PBL) nurtures a deeper comprehension of content and concepts as students apply their knowledge to tackle authentic challenges. They refine critical thinking and problem-solving abilities by analyzing information, weighing options, and making decisions within the framework of PBL. PBL also enhances communication skills as students convey their findings and collaborate with peers. Engaging in purposeful and compelling projects inspires students and sustains their involvement in the learning process.

Bhat and Dar (2023) outlined the fundamental elements and advantages of PBL as follows:

- 1. Authentic Projects:** Projects are crafted to replicate real-world problems or scenarios, making the learning experience meaningful and relevant.
- 2. Inquiry and Investigation:** Students delve into and research the project topic, often across multiple disciplines, to deepen their understanding.
- 3. Collaboration:** PBL fosters teamwork and collaboration, mirroring the collaborative nature of professional environments.
- 4. Student Agency:** Students have a degree of choice and autonomy in selecting how they approach and present their projects.

Implementing Project-Based Learning Pedagogy.

The implementation of PBL according to Sulistyani (2018) and Philen (2016) is as follows:

Planning: Teachers design projects that align with learning objectives and student interests while ensuring relevance to curriculum standards.

Facilitation: Teachers act as guides or facilitators, providing support, feedback, and resources as students work through the project to make learning meaningful and engaging.

Assessment: Assessment in PBL often includes multiple checkpoints throughout the project and may incorporate peer evaluation and self-reflection to assess both process and product.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a type of language learning and instruction that concentrates on the language and communication skills required in specific academic or professional contexts. ESP courses are personalized to

align with the linguistic and communicative requirements of apprentices in specialized fields such as business, engineering, medicine, or tourism. Unlike general English courses, ESP aims to enhance language proficiency that is relevant to specific disciplines or professions (Fitria 2020).

Key Features and Benefits of ESP:

ESP courses emphasize developing language skills that are tailored to learners' professional or academic goals. This includes specialized vocabulary, workplace communication, and academic writing. According to Hyland (2022) and Diachkova et al. (2021), the key features and benefits of ESP are as follows:

Key Features of ESP:

- **Authentic Materials:** ESP classes utilize authentic texts, documents, and tasks that mirror real-world contexts and scenarios.
- **Needs Assessment:** ESP programs typically commence with a needs analysis to identify learners' specific language needs, goals, and usage contexts.

Benefits of ESP:

- **Relevance:** ESP courses are highly relevant to learners' immediate and future career or academic goals, making the learning process more engaging and meaningful.
- **Effective Communication:** By focusing on specific language skills and contexts, ESP helps learners become more proficient and confident communicators in their field.
- **Employability:** Enhanced language skills through ESP can improve students' employability and career advancement opportunities in globalized workplaces

Approaches to ESP

- **Project-Based Learning:** ESP often employs project-based learning approaches where students

engage in tasks that simulate real-world communicative activities, they are likely to encounter in their field.

- **Content-Based Instruction:** Mixes language teaching and learning with subject matter content relevant to apprentices' academic or professional interests.

Farmati, Yeou, and Benzehaf (2023) researched the use of ICT in educational settings, which has garnered significant attention in educational investigations. Their regular review aimed to support and offer ESP experts with an updated overview of the power of hybrid learning in (ESP) teaching. The study examined and summarized 28 research articles published between 2012 and 2022, which met specific selection criteria. The results indicated that blended learning could enhance university ESP students' language skills. Numerous studies emphasize the substantial advantages that blended learning offers to ESP learning, including flexibility, autonomy, and collaboration. However, the findings also pointed to challenges that some students encounter, such as discouragement, postponement, and technical issues. Building on these findings, the review concluded with recommendations for ESP teachers and researchers.

In their study, Sukerti and Yuliantini (2018) analyzed students' attitudes toward learning autonomy using (PBL) to teach writing in (ESP) classes. The research involved 25 second-semester students in an Informatics Management program. PBL improved students' learning outcomes and encouraged self-directed learning, leading to a deeper understanding of grammar and language use.

ESP skills and sub-skills needed for business students:

Business writing skills

According to Guffey & Loewy (2021), they include:

- **Email Protocol:** proficient business emails entail a lucid subject line, brevity, professional salutations and closings, meticulous organization, and comprehensive proofreading before dispatch.
- **Business Reports:** Adept business reports include a well-defined structure, an unbiased tone, the strategic use of visuals, exhaustive analysis, and comprehensive source citations.
- **Interoffice Memoranda:** Effective memos should explicitly articulate their purpose, be succinct and unambiguous, furnish pertinent specifics, employ bullet points for clarity, and maintain a professional demeanor.

Oral Communication:

According to Zanola (2016), they include:

- **Presentations:** Delivering effective presentations with clear structure, persuasive arguments, and appropriate visual aids.
- **Meetings:** Participating actively and effectively in meetings, including making contributions and taking minutes.
- **Networking:** Engaging in professional networking, including introductions and small talk.

Negotiation and Persuasion:

According to Schweinsberg et al (2022), they include:

- **Negotiation Tactics:** Utilizing language for negotiation, including making offers, counteroffers, and reaching agreements.
- **Persuasion Techniques:** Using persuasive language to influence and convince others.

Listening Skills:

According to Sekkal (2020), they include:

- **Active Listening:** Demonstrating active listening techniques, such as summarizing, paraphrasing, and asking clarifying questions.
- **Understanding Accents and Dialects:** Comprehending various English accents and dialects in a global business context.

1. Reading and Comprehension:

According to Sasabone and Pongpalilu (2022), they include:

- **Business Documents:** Reading and understanding business documents such as contracts, reports, and market analyses.
- **Industry-Specific Literature:** Keeping up with industry-specific articles, journals, and reports.

Intercultural Communication:

According to Marcu (2023), they include:

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Communicating effectively and respectfully with colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- **Global Business Practices:** Understanding and adapting to different business communication styles and practices.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:

According to Kulamikhina, et al (2020), they include:

- **Analytical Skills:** Analyzing information and making reasoned decisions.
- **Problem-Solving Discussions:** Engaging in discussions that require critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving.

Digital Literacy:

According to Putri Anggini & Siti Rodliyah (2020), they include

- **Online Communication:** Using digital tools for communication, such as video conferencing and collaborative platforms.
- **Social media:** Understanding the professional use of social media for business communication and marketing.

In the current research Business writing, Negotiation, and Persuasion skills were utilized to improve ESP skills for business students through PBL.

Business Writing

According to Pop and Sim (2016), business writing encompasses the specialized communication techniques and practices utilized in professional environments to share information clearly and persuasively. A defining characteristic of business writing across various formats—such as letters, emails, and documents—is its style. Regardless of the type of document, the objective should be to present information concisely, clearly, and efficiently. The way companies, corporations, governments, and institutions communicate and exchange information is significantly influenced by various business

communication styles. As mentioned by Guffey and Loewy (2021), the key aspects of business writing include:

Purpose:

Business writing serves various purposes, such as informing, persuading, instructing, or documenting. It often aims to achieve specific business objectives, such as gaining clients, informing stakeholders, or facilitating decision-making.

Types of Business Writing:

- **Emails:** Used for quick communication within and outside the organization.
- **Reports:** Formal documents that provide detailed information on a specific topic or issue.
- **Proposals:** Documents that propose a solution or course of action to address a problem or opportunity.
- **Memoranda (Memos):** Internal communications that convey information or decisions within an organization.

1) **Business Letters:** Formal correspondence with external parties, such as clients, suppliers, or regulatory bodies.

Key Features:

- **Clarity:** Business writing should be clear, concise, and free from unnecessary jargon or ambiguity.
- **Professional Tone:** Maintaining a professional tone and style appropriate for the audience and purpose.
- **Accuracy:** Providing accurate information and data to support assertions or recommendations.

- **Conciseness:** Conveying information efficiently without unnecessary verbosity.
- **Persuasiveness:** For documents such as proposals or marketing materials, business writing often aims to persuade the reader to take a specific action or accept a viewpoint.

Audience:

Understanding the audience is crucial in business writing. Writers must take into consideration the knowledge level, attitudes, personalities, expectations, and needs of the readers to adapt the message effectively.

2) Skills Needed:

- **Writing and Editing:** Proficiency in writing clear, well-structured sentences and paragraphs.
- **Research:** Gathering and analyzing information to support arguments or recommendations.
- **Critical Thinking:** Evaluating information and making reasoned judgments or recommendations.
- **Adaptability:** Adapting writing style and format to different types of business documents and audiences.
- **Collaboration:** Working with colleagues or stakeholders to gather information and refine documents.

Arina (2019) clarified that poor writing can negatively impact both individuals and companies. It can lead to confusion, misunderstandings, and wasted resources such as time and money, while also damaging credibility and trust. In contrast, clear writing boosts productivity, fosters goodwill, and strengthens relationships. This article examines it and the solutions suggested in the literature. Problems such as wordiness, non-concrete vocabulary, and

passive structures can obscure the message and exhaust the reader. On the other hand, removing unnecessary words, using straightforward language and personal pronouns, and constructing sentences with clear subjects and verbs can effectively carry the message and make business writing more impactful.

Turner and Scholtz's (2010) study examined the effectiveness of a project employed at three higher education institutions as well as various workplaces to compare the required writing skills taught in business writing programs with those used in real work environments. The research aimed to assess whether business communication courses effectively equip students for professional business communication. The study involved analyzing documents from both academic and workplace contexts and conducting surveys and formal and informal interviews with students, lecturers, employees, and employers. The data collected were compared across these different settings. The results showed both similarities and differences in business writing applications between higher education activities and tasks and those of the workplace. The paper provided recommendations to better align classroom instruction with workplace practices, enhancing both student learning and professional communication.

Negotiation and Persuasion Skills

Negotiation and persuasion are essential skills in various professional and personal contexts, involving the ability to influence others' decisions and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Here's an overview of each:

1. Negotiation:

According to Gates (2022) negotiation is a communication process where individuals or parties discuss issues and attempt to reach a mutually acceptable agreement.

Key Skills:

- **Communication:** Effective negotiation requires clear and articulate communication of interests, positions, and proposals.
- **Problem-solving:** Identifying common ground and exploring solutions that satisfy both parties' needs.
- **Flexibility:** Adapting strategies and approaches based on new information or changing circumstances.
- **Empathy:** Understanding the other side's perspective and emotions to shape relationships and trust.
- **Assertiveness:** Advocating for one's interests and objectives while respecting others' viewpoints.

Types of Negotiation:

- **Distributive Negotiation:** Involves a stable number of resources to be divided between parties, often competitive.
- **Integrative Negotiation:** Aims to create value for both parties by exploring multiple options and interests (Schweinsberg et al, 2022).

2. Persuasion:

Ciortescu (2020) stated that Persuasion is the process of influencing the attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors of others through credible and compelling arguments or appeals.

Key Skills:

- **Rhetorical Skills:** Effectively framing arguments and persuasively presenting them.
- **Evidence-Based Reasoning:** Supporting claims with credible evidence, data, or examples.
- **Emotional Appeal:** Using emotions to connect with the audience and evoke desired responses.
- **Ethical Considerations:** Ensuring honesty, transparency, and respect for others' autonomy in persuasion efforts.

- **Adaptability:** Tailoring messages to appeal to different audiences and contexts.
- **Applications:** Persuasion is used in various contexts, including sales, marketing, advocacy, leadership, and negotiation.

England and Nagel's (2022) study aimed to offer a cost-effective method for teaching emotional intelligence (EI) skills in electronic message communication, employing Dale Carnegie's 30 Human Relations Principles. The technique involved a real-life, multi-party negotiation and persuasion scenario involving a Fortune 500 executive, fostering critical thinking in students about business decision-making. Active learning was integral, promoting collaboration and reflection among students. Comprehensive resources are provided to support instructors in teaching EI and managing the project effectively.

In their study, Richards et al (2020) explored the impact of integrating negotiation self-confidence and established tutorial tools to enhance student's educational practices in business education. By utilizing negotiation cases, they assessed students' capabilities in value creation and claiming, goal maximization, and the avoidance of unclaimed bargaining value. The study illustrated how a negotiation exercise in a marketing context boosted students' confidence and negotiation skills, as evaluated through a negotiation self-confidence scale administered in pre- and post-surveys.

Crawford Camiciottoli (2018) focused on the pragma linguistic analysis of persuasion in business communication, specifically in earnings calls. It offers insights into how language is used to persuade stakeholders in financial contexts.

Pop and Sim (2016) found that effective business communication requires a clear and concise style to efficiently transmit information. Their study highlights that the main feature of business writing across different forms (letters, emails, documents) is maintaining a professional style. The research underscores the importance of tailoring communication strategies to the audience and context to enhance clarity and persuasiveness in business interactions.

Peleckiene and Peleckis (2015) observed that strategic planning of a negotiating speech requires selecting the most suitable methods to achieve the intended goal. This involved taking into account every aspect of language when applying strategic orientations. Negotiation, which could be viewed as a form of public speaking within the context of negotiations, is a planned process that embraces understanding the situation, thoughtful actions, and planning to reach objectives. During negotiations, significant outcomes were created collaboratively, and participants' sentiments, thoughts, points of view, and principles were tested, modified, and settled through communication. Negotiation approaches could differ greatly across cultures, with changing importance or significance attributed to certain facts and details by different negotiators, affecting their interpretation and understanding of statements. The paper discussed the rhetorical effects in negotiations, emphasizing that persuasive speech is a crucial skill for negotiators, as nothing could replace live speech. Direct negotiation, involving the exchange of evidence, opinions, counter-arguments, and controversies, enabled negotiators to professionally progress toward the overall goal of reaching an agreement.

Sharma (2021) clarified that despite advanced modern communication methods, such as the Internet and

electronic negotiation support systems, negotiators still travel for face-to-face negotiations. In live bargaining processes, negotiators demonstrate their appearance, intellect, conduct, passions, morals, politeness, voice features, gestures, activities, facial language, and other communication possibilities. The use of verbal tools and maintaining eye contact with the other side are crucial for effective negotiations. While classical rhetoric focuses on persuading the other party, modern rhetoric emphasizes dialogue, interaction between speakers, and harmonization of relations.

Commentary

Project-Based Learning (PBL) emerges as a powerful instructional strategy, particularly within (ESP) programs. The intrinsic alignment of PBL with real-world tasks and challenges makes it an ideal approach for enhancing ESP students' competencies, notably in business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills. These skills are indispensable for effective communication in the global business arena.

Project-Based Learning and its Relation to Language Proficiency and Practical Skills

Project-Based Learning (PBL) plays a crucial role in developing language proficiency and practical skills. Its student-centered approach creates an environment where learners deeply engage with the material through hands-on projects, essential for ESP students who need to master both linguistic subtleties and professional communication demands. The current study's results align with Turner and Scholtz's (2010) research on PBL's effectiveness in bridging the gap between academic writing skills and real-world business communication needs. Similarities can also be drawn with Villalba (2022) and Huang (2019), who emphasized the integration of technology and simulation

techniques, respectively, to enhance learning within the PBL framework. Another study by Sirisrimangkorn (2021) highlighted PBL's effectiveness in improving speaking skills through authentic, IT-integrated projects. Similarly, Emery (2021) and Tuyen & Tien (2021) pointed out that PBL not only enhances language proficiency but also develops soft skills such as teamwork and self-accountability. Collectively, these studies, including the current research, underscore the significance of collaborative and team-based learning approaches in achieving educational goals.

Improving Business Writing Through PBL

Business writing is a critical component of ESP courses, requiring precision, clarity, and persuasiveness. PBL immerses students in authentic writing tasks, from drafting emails to crafting complex reports and proposals. By engaging in projects that simulate workplace scenarios, students develop a keen understanding of professional communication standards. Research by Turner and Scholtz (2010) indicated that aligning business writing curricula with real-world practices significantly enhanced students' preparedness for professional environments. Moreover, Arina (2019) emphasized the importance of clear and effective writing in fostering productivity and credibility in business contexts.

Negotiation and Persuasion: Key Skills in the Global Business Context

Negotiation and persuasion are pivotal skills for business professionals, requiring a blend of rhetorical finesse, strategic thinking, and empathetic communication. PBL provides a practical framework for developing these skills through simulated business negotiations and persuasive communication projects. The current study's findings are similar to those obtained by Peleckiene and Peleckis (2015)

who highlighted the critical role of rhetorical skills in effective negotiation, where live interactions and persuasive speech were irreplaceable. By engaging in collaborative projects that mimic real-world negotiation scenarios, students refined their ability to influence and reach mutually beneficial agreements.

There are apparent similarities also between this study and studies by England and Nagels (2022) and Pop and Sim (2016) who highlighted the importance of effective business communication and the importance of maintaining a professional writing style across different business documents. All studies emphasized the need for clear, concise, and persuasive communication in business contexts. They incorporated active learning and practical scenarios (e.g., real-life negotiations and simulations) to enhance students' skills. They also focused on developing specific skills such as emotional intelligence (EI), negotiation, and decision-making.

The findings of the current study differed from other studies in various aspects. For example, Villalba (2022) concentrated on using blogging to enhance written skills in a Business English course. Tuyen & Tien (2021) explored students' perceptions of PBL in ESP courses at a specific university. Emery (2021) described PBL as an effective method that is gaining popularity in Vietnam. Huang (2019) examined the application of simulation techniques in PBL within a simulated business environment. England and Nagels (2022) primarily focused on improving emotional intelligence (EI) skills in electronic communication using Dale Carnegie's principles. Richards et al. (2020) investigated the impact of integrating negotiation skills and building confidence through established tutorials and practical cases. Crawford Camiciottoli (2018) analyzed the pragma-linguistic aspects of negotiation, specifically in earnings calls. Pop and Sim

(2016) emphasized the importance of clear and concise writing across various business forms (letters, emails, documents). Felekides and Peleckis (2015) studied strategic planning in negotiations, focusing on choosing suitable methods to achieve intended goals.

Benefits and Challenges of Implementing PBL in ESP

The previously mentioned studies offered valuable benefits of implementing PBL in ESP. Villalba (2022) demonstrated that integrating blogging into a Business English course significantly enhanced students' writing abilities and digital literacy through (PBL). Tuyen & Tien (2021) found that PBL in ESP courses not only improved language proficiency but also equipped students with industry-specific skills, fostering motivation and self-accountability despite challenges in teamwork. Emery (2021) highlighted PBL's considerable effectiveness in enhancing both language proficiency and soft skills, noting its increasing adoption in Vietnamese educational settings. Huang (2019) showed that simulation-based PBL increased engagement and practical application among students, promoting social interaction and collaborative learning. These studies collectively underscored the transformative impact of innovative educational methods like PBL in improving ESP learner outcomes across language skills, professional competencies, and overall learning engagement.

While PBL offers numerous benefits, such as deeper learning, critical thinking, and enhanced communication skills, it also presents challenges. Tuyen and Tien (2021) noted that peer-related issues, such as varying skill levels and negative attitudes, can hinder the effectiveness of PBL. However, these challenges are often outweighed by the advantages, including improved language proficiency and heightened motivation among students. The integration of

simulations, as suggested by Huang (2019), further enhances the practical application of language skills in a psychologically safe environment.

It is apparent from the above-reviewed literature and the related studies that Project-Based Learning stands out as a transformative approach in ESP education, particularly for business-focused courses. By engaging students in real-world projects, PBL not only enhances their linguistic competencies but also equips them with essential real-life professional skills. Thus, the current research underscored the significance of using PBL to improve ESP students' business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills

Context of the Study Problem:

As a staff member teaching English 4 (Essentials of Business Communication) course to ESP students at Sadat Academy for Management Sciences, the researcher noticed poor business writing, negotiation, and persuasion abilities among these students. Besides, the related previous studies have confirmed this problem. They revealed that students confronted problems when exposed to business writing tasks and activities. Thus, the current study problem could be stated as follows: Second-year business students at Sadat Academy for Management Sciences had low levels of Business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills. A thirty-student sample was nominated for the pilot study. This revealed that students had low performance levels in their ESP business writing skills as well as negotiation and persuasion skills. Furthermore, reviewing the related literature emphasized the obligation of using PBL as an independent variable for improving ESP students' business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills.

In contemporary language education, there is a growing emphasis on adopting innovative instructional approaches to meet the specialized requirements of all learners in

numerous professional fields. It is evident that (ESP) courses, which are outfitted to the linguistic and communicative demands of specific fields such as business, engineering, and healthcare, require methodologies that go beyond traditional language instruction. PBL has appeared as an efficacious approach in this context, offering a dynamic framework that engages ESP students in authentic, real-world tasks.

This research focused on the application of PBL in improving the competencies of ESP students, specifically in business writing, negotiation, and persuasion. These skills are critical for effective communication in global business environments, where clear, concise, and persuasive communication can significantly impact professional success. By integrating PBL into ESP courses, educators aim to provide students with practical experience that mirrors the challenges they will face in their careers, thereby fostering both linguistic proficiency and essential soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and adaptability.

The context of this study was set following the background of growing globalization and the corresponding need for professionals who can communicate effectively across cultures and contexts. As businesses operate on an international scale, the ability to write professional documents, negotiate deals, and persuade stakeholders becomes crucial. This study sought to explore how PBL can be utilized to prepare ESP students for these demands better, contributing to the broader goal of enhancing language education through innovative pedagogical strategies.

Statement of the Study:

Drawing from the literature review, the researcher identified the current study problem. The problem was

stated as (ESP) students' deficiency in business writing skills, negotiation, and persuasion abilities, negatively impacting their language performance in business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills. The primary aim was to determine whether PBL as contrasted to the regular way of teaching can effectively improve these ESP writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills, which are essential for successful communication in global business environments. By connecting students to authentic, real everyday life tasks and activities that simulate professional challenges, this study sought to provide practical evidence on the benefits and potential challenges of integrating PBL into ESP curricula. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the impact of using PBL to improve ESP students' business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills

Aims:

The current study aimed to use PBL to:

1. improve (ESP) students' business writing skills.
2. improve (ESP) students' negotiation skills.
3. improve (ESP) students' persuasion skills.

Questions:

The following major question will be answered over the recent study:

What is the effectiveness of using PBL in improving the business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills of ESP students?

This question can be branched out into these sub-questions:

1. What are the business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills mostly needed by ESP students at Sadat Academy for Management Sciences?
2. Are there statistically significant differences in the means of scores between the experimental and

control groups on the post-test for business writing skills?

3. Are there statistically significant differences in the means of scores between the experimental and control groups on the post-test for negotiation and persuasion skills?
4. How effective is PBL in enhancing the business writing skills of ESP students at Sadat Academy for Management Sciences?
5. How effective is PBL in improving the negotiation and persuasion skills of ESP students at Sadat Academy for Management Sciences?

Significance:

The significance of this research lies in providing practical evidence of the benefits of (PBL) in (ESP) courses as follows:

- 1. Innovative Pedagogical Approaches:** By exploring the application of PBL, the study promoted innovative teaching methods that can enhance language proficiency and practical skills, addressing the evolving needs of learners in professional contexts.
- 2. Enhanced Language Competencies:** The research aimed to demonstrate how PBL can significantly improve ESP students' business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills, which are critical for effective communication in global business environments.
- 3. Increasing Soft Skills:** The study highlighted the role of PBL in fostering essential soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and adaptability, which are crucial for professional success and often overlooked in traditional language education.

- 4. Practical Insights for Educators:** The findings provided valuable insights for educators on how to effectively integrate PBL into ESP curricula, offering practical recommendations to enhance teaching practices and better prepare students for real-world challenges.
- 5. Contributing to Educational Research:** The study contributed to educational research, especially in language education and ESP, by offering data-driven insights into the effects of PBL on student outcomes.

Delimitations

- 1. Participants:** Ninety second-year ESP students from the Sadat Academy for Management Sciences (Minia Branch) participated in the study.
- 2. The ESP skills:** Only the following ESP business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills were included:
planning, organizing, drafting, and revising business messages such as formal/informal reports, emails, memos, letters, proposals, persuasive messages, direct claims, complaints, and goodwill messages.
- 3. Duration of Study:** The study was applied throughout the second semester of the 2022-2023 academic year in (English 4) Essentials of Business Communication course.
- 4. Geographical Context:** The study was conducted within the Sadat Academy for Management Sciences (Minia Branch).

Definitions:

1. Project-Based Learning (PBL):

A student-centered instruction employs an active classroom strategy where students gain a profound understanding via the involvement and exploration of real-world difficulties and issues (Condliffe, 2017).

PBL engages students in collaborative projects that necessitate problem-solving abilities, critical and creative thinking, and the everyday application of the acquired knowledge, promoting a deeper comprehension and retention of the material (Hung, 2011).

Operational Definition:

In this study, Project-Based Learning (PBL) refers to a pedagogical approach where ESP students engage in structured projects that mimic real-world business challenges over a semester. These projects are designed to enhance their business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills through hands-on, collaborative tasks that require critical thinking and practical application of language skills.

Business Writing

Business writing involves composing documents such as emails, reports, and proposals with clarity, conciseness, and professionalism to effectively communicate in a business context. (Hyland, 2016)

Business writing is the creation of written communications that are clear, purposeful, and appropriate for business settings, ensuring effective information transfer and professional interaction. (Turner and Scholtz, 2010)

Operational Definition:

Business writing is the ability of ESP students to create professional documents, including emails, reports, and proposals, that are clear, concise, and persuasive. The effectiveness of business writing will be measured through pre- and post-project assessments of students' written assignments based on criteria such as clarity, coherence, grammar, and persuasiveness.

Negotiation and Persuasion

Persuasion is the act of influencing others' attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors through compelling arguments and rhetoric. (Perloff, 2017)

Operational Definition:

Negotiation and persuasion are the skills demonstrated by ESP students in simulated business scenarios where they must reach agreements and influence stakeholders. These skills will be evaluated based on students' performance in role-playing exercises and presentations and assessed for their ability to articulate their position, negotiate terms, and persuade their counterparts effectively.

Method

Research Design

The current study utilized a quasi-experimental pre-post control group design to evaluate the impact of PBL on enhancing ESP students' business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills. The session materials were derived from the current term's (English 4) Essentials of Business Communication course topics.

Participants

The study included 90 second-year information systems students who were randomly selected from Sadat Academy for Management Sciences at the Minia Branch throughout the second semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. These participants were split into two intact groups, each consisting of 45 students. The experimental group received training through PBL to enhance their business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills, while the control group was trained using regular training methods.

Variables:

Independent Variable:

- Project-based learning

Dependent Variables:

- Business writing skills
- Negotiation, and persuasion skills

Instruments of the Study

1. Needs Assessment Questionnaire of ESP business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills (See Appendix 1)

The aims of the questionnaire

1. To determine the relatedness of each sub-skill to the main one.
2. To identify the most needed business writing sub-skills.

Construction

- Stating the objectives.
- Listing sub-skills through literature review and consulting jury members.
- The final version included the most needed skills refined through jury member consultation.

Validity

Five TEFL expert members confirmed the questionnaire's face validity. The final version included the items covering all study variables.

2. Business Writing Skills Test (See Appendix 2)

The aim of the test

The business writing test was carefully constructed to assess second-year ESP students' proficiency in conveying information within interactive business settings through written communication. It evaluated their ability to effectively employ various business writing types to communicate.

Construction

The test consisted of four productive questions aligned with the material's objectives and encompassing various business writing skills.

- 1. Email Writing Task:** Students were given a scenario where they needed to write a professional email. This task assessed their ability to convey clear and concise messages, use appropriate language and tone, and follow standard email etiquette.
- 2. Report Writing Task:** Students were required to write a business report based on provided data or information. This task evaluated their capacity to organize information logically, present findings and recommendations clearly, and adhere to report formatting conventions.
- 3. Memos Writing Task:** Students were tasked with drafting a memo addressing a specific issue within a business context. This assessed their ability to communicate internal messages effectively, including conveying instructions, updates, or recommendations to colleagues.
- 4. Proposal Writing Task:** Students were asked to prepare a business proposal for a potential project or initiative. This task tested their ability to articulate project objectives, outline methodologies, justified resource allocation, and proposed measurable outcomes.

Timing

It was divided into four sections, and each student's completion time was recorded and averaged across the entire group, with a total assessment duration of 60 minutes

Scoring: Each task was evaluated using a scoring rubric aligned with the specific objectives and criteria for effective business communication. **The rubric** includes assessment categories such as:

- 1. Content (Accuracy and Relevance):** Demonstrating understanding of the topic and providing insightful content.
- 2. Organization (Structure and Flow):** Presenting information in a logical sequence with clear headings and subheadings.

3. **Language Use (Clarity and Professionalism):** Using language that is clear, concise, and appropriate for business communication.
4. **Format and Presentation:** Adhering to formatting guidelines (e.g., headers, font style) and presenting information professionally.
5. **Overall Effectiveness:** Evaluating the overall impact and effectiveness of the communication in achieving its intended purpose.

Instructions

The test instructions, presented in English, were succinct, precise, and free from ambiguity, outlining the assessment's purpose and allotted time.

Validity:

The test's internal consistency was evaluated using the Pearson correlation formula, resulting in coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.89.

Reliability:

The test's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha formula, yielding a coefficient of 0.85, indicating satisfactory reliability.

3. The Negotiation and Persuasion Skills Test (See Appendix 3)

The aim of the test

The Negotiation and Persuasion Skills test was designed to evaluate students' proficiency in negotiating deals and persuading stakeholders within interactive business contexts. It assessed their ability to effectively communicate, influence decisions, and reach mutually beneficial agreements.

Construction

The assessment consisted of 4 questions aligned with the material's objectives and encompassing various business writing skills. It was divided into four sections, and each

student's completion time was recorded and averaged across the entire group, with a total assessment duration of 60 minutes .

- 1. Negotiation Role-Play Task:** Students participated in a negotiation simulation where they were assigned roles representing different stakeholders (e.g., buyer, seller, mediator). This task assessed their ability to use negotiation tactics, such as proposing offers, making concessions, and reaching compromises.
- 2. Persuasive Pitch Task:** Students prepared and delivered a persuasive pitch for a business idea or proposal. This task evaluated their ability to structure arguments persuasively, use compelling language and visuals, and address potential objections.
- 3. Conflict Resolution Scenario:** Students were presented with a conflict scenario within a business context and tasked with proposing a resolution. This assessed their ability to analyze conflicts, facilitate discussions, and propose solutions that satisfy all parties involved.
- 4. Case Study Analysis:** Students analyzed a case study involving a business negotiation or persuasion scenario. They were required to identify key issues, evaluate strategies used by parties involved, and propose alternative approaches or improvements.

Timing

It was divided into four sections, and each student's completion time was recorded and averaged across the entire group, with a total assessment duration of 60 minutes

Scoring

Each task is evaluated using a **scoring rubric** aligned with the specific objectives and criteria for effective negotiation and persuasion skills.

- 1. Negotiation Tactics:** Demonstrating effective negotiation techniques, such as listening actively, proposing creative solutions, and achieving win-win outcomes.

2. **Persuasion Strategies:** Using persuasive language, logical arguments, and evidence to influence decision-making and gain stakeholder buy-in.
3. **Conflict Resolution:** Demonstrating empathy, facilitation skills, and the ability to navigate conflicts toward mutually acceptable resolutions.
4. **Analytical Thinking:** Analyzing situations critically, considering multiple perspectives, and proposing reasoned solutions.
5. **Overall Effectiveness:** Evaluating the overall impact and effectiveness of negotiation and persuasion strategies in achieving desired outcomes.

Instructions

The test instructions, presented in English, were succinct, precise, and free from ambiguity, outlining the assessment's purpose and allotted time.

Validity

The test's internal consistency was assessed using the Pearson correlation formula, resulting in coefficients ranging from 0.70 to 0.85.

Reliability

The Cronbach's Alpha formula was applied, resulting in a reliability coefficient of 0.81, indicating an acceptable level of reliability.

Experimental Procedure

Pre-Testing

Pre-testing was conducted to assess ESP students' business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills before implementing the PBL program and to measure their improvement.

Experimentation

Ninety second-year ESP students, from Sadat Academy - Minia Branch, took part in the study in the second semester of the 2022/2023 academic year. They were split into two

groups: the experimental group and the control group. An orientation session provided clarity on the study's objectives and the skills required.

Steps in Building the PBL Program:

1. Reviewing literature related to ESP business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills
2. Compiling a list of the needed skills.
3. Assessing the list by a panel of five TEFL experts.
4. Defining and evaluating the main objectives of the program.
5. Having the entire program reviewed by language experts for clarity of items, content verification, and the appropriateness of activities.

The PBL program

The Project-Based Learning program aimed at improving ESP Students' Business Writing, Negotiation, and Persuasion skills. Each session incorporated engaging activities and real-life business writing skills applications. (See Appendix 4)

Content of the program

The material consists of the following sessions:

Session 1: Introduction to Business Writing and Project-Based Learning

Session 2: The Business Writing Process and Types

Session 3: Organizing, Drafting, and Revising Business Messages

Session 4: Negotiation and Persuasive Messages

Session 5: Short workplace messages

Session 6: Persuasion Skills

Session 7: Project Workday – Proposal/Report Preparation

Session 8: Business Proposal/Report Presentations

Session 9: Reflection and Feedback

Session 10: Wrap-up and Final Reflection

Steps of Implementing the Sessions:

1. Session Start: Each session began with face-to-face interactions aiming at capturing participants' interest.
2. Overview of Session Content: The researcher presented an outline of the session's content.
3. Objectives and Delivery of Content: Participants were briefed on the program's objectives and how the content would be delivered.
4. Duration of Sessions: Each session was two hours a week.

Activities

The PBL program featured these types of activities:

Session 1:

- Discuss the importance of effective business communication.
- Introduce PBL principles and their relevance to learning business skills.
- Group formation and initial project brainstorming.

Session 2:

- Analyze sample business emails, memos, and reports.
- Practice drafting emails and memos related to typical business scenarios.
- Peer review and feedback on writing tasks.

Session 3:

- Introduce the project requirements and timeline.
- Brainstorm business proposal ideas in groups.
- Outline sections of a business proposal (executive summary, objectives, methodology).

Session 4:

- Discuss negotiation principles and effective strategies.

- Role-play negotiation scenarios (e.g., buyer-seller, team negotiation).
- Analyze negotiation outcomes and debrief.

Session 5:

- Work in groups to draft specific sections of the business proposal.
- Peer review and revise proposal drafts based on feedback.
- Discuss formatting and presentation tips for professional proposals.

Session 6:

- Study persuasive techniques and their application in business contexts.
- Prepare persuasive pitches or presentations for project proposals.
- Practice delivering pitches and receiving constructive feedback.

Session 7:

- Practice presenting proposals in groups.
- Refine presentation skills, including voice projection and visual aids.
- Conduct peer evaluations and provide feedback.

Session 8:

- Each group presents their business proposal to the class.
- Q&A session and feedback from peers and instructor.
- Evaluate presentations based on content, delivery, and persuasiveness.

Session 9:

- Individual reflections on the project experience and personal growth.

- Group discussion on lessons learned, challenges faced, and skills developed.
- Instructor feedback and guidance on improvement areas.

Session 10:

- Review of key concepts and skills covered throughout the course.
- Discuss future applications of business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills.
- Final reflection and feedback session to consolidate learning outcomes.

Procedures for using PBL to improve business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills:

- 1. Introduction of the Project:** Presenting the project topic or problem to students, often linked to real-world scenarios.
- 2. Driving Question:** Formulating a central question that guides the project and stimulates inquiry.
- 3. Planning:** Collaborating with students to plan the project, set goals, and establish timelines.
- 4. Research and Inquiry:** Conducting research, gathering information, and engaging in critical thinking to explore the topic.
- 5. Collaboration:** Encouraging teamwork and collaboration among students to share ideas and resources.
- 6. Creation and Development:** Creating a tangible product or solution, such as a report, presentation, or model.
- 7. Feedback and Revision:** Providing feedback, allowing students to revise their work, and refine their solutions or products.
- 8. Presentation:** Students present their findings or products to an audience, which includes peers, teachers, or external stakeholders.

- 9. Reflection:** Reflecting on the project process and outcomes, discussing what was learned, and identifying areas for improvement.

Duration

The training period spanned from February 2023 to mid-May 2023 (second term). During this time, the program's objectives were addressed in weekly sessions, with each session lasting two hours and incorporating Project-Based Learning (PBL).

Role of the Instructor

In the context of implementing (PBL) to improve ESP students' business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills, the instructor's role was central to the success of the pedagogical approach. Here are the key roles of the instructor:

- 1. Facilitator:** The instructor guided and mentored students, providing resources, support, and feedback to encourage critical thinking and problem-solving.
- 2. Designer of Learning Experiences:** The instructor created relevant projects that simulated real-world business challenges, requiring the use of business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills.
- 3. Resource Provider:** The instructor offered access to articles, case studies, tools, technologies, and connections to business professionals.
- 4. Assessment and Feedback:** The instructor developed assessment criteria, and offered constructive feedback to improve students' skills.
- 5. Motivator and Supporter:** The instructor motivated students, fostered a positive learning environment, and helped them overcome challenges.
- 6. Facilitating Collaboration:** The instructor promoted effective teamwork, resolved conflicts, and encouraged equitable participation.

7. **Reflective Practitioner:** The instructor continuously assessed and adjusted the PBL approach, and sought student feedback.
8. **Cultural and Contextual Mediator:** The instructor helped students navigate cultural differences and diverse communication styles in a global business context.

Role of Students

Students took on active and collaborative roles that were crucial for their learning and development. Here are the key roles of the students:

1. **Active Learners:** actively participating in projects, and assuming responsibility for seeking information, resources, and guidance to explore project topics and solve problems independently
2. **Collaborators:** working together with peers, sharing ideas, responsibilities, and tasks, engaging in group discussions, and actively listening, emphasizing effective teamwork and communication
3. **Researchers:** researching to gather relevant information and data needed for their projects
4. **Problem-solvers:** applying critical thinking and problem-solving skills throughout their projects, identifying challenges, generating solutions through brainstorming, and making well-informed decisions to overcome obstacles, fostering analytical and strategic thinking abilities
5. **Communicators:** practicing and refining their business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills through various project activities, creating written documents, participating in discussions and role-plays, and delivering presentations, focusing on clear and effective communication
6. **Self-reflective practitioners:** engaging in self-assessment to monitor their progress and learning, considering feedback from peers and instructors, and using it to improve their work

7. **Autonomous Learners:** exercising independence in their learning, making decisions about their projects, time management, and presentation of outcomes
8. **Innovator:** thinking creatively and innovatively as they tackle projects, exploring new ideas, and experimenting with different methods
9. **Peer Reviewer:** providing constructive feedback to their peers, contributing to mutual learning and growth

Evaluating The Project-Based Learning Program

Evaluating the (PBL) program before its implementation aimed to ensure it meets the educational goals and effectively engages students. The following are key steps:

1. Needs Assessment:
 - Conducting surveys, and informal interviews, with some students, instructors, and stakeholders to identify the learning needs.
 - Reviewing the current educational standards and curriculum requirements to align the PBL program with the institutional goals.
2. Define Objectives:
 - Outlining the desired outcomes and objectives of the PBL program.
3. Literature Review and Best Practices:
 - Researching existing PBL programs and best practices in similar educational contexts.
 - Utilizing findings to inform the design and structure of the PBL program.
4. Develop Evaluation Criteria:
 - Establishing criteria for evaluating the program's success, such as student engagement, knowledge acquisition, skill development, and collaboration.
5. Design and Planning:
 - Creating detailed plans for the PBL program, including timelines, resources, and instructional strategies.
 - Ensuring alignment with learning objectives and standards.

6. Pilot Testing:
 - Implementing a pilot version of the PBL program with a small group of students.
7. Evaluation Plan:
 - Developing a comprehensive plan for continuing evaluation.

Pre-experimentation

The researcher performed an initial test of business writing skills. Analysis of the t-values revealed no statistically significant differences in the means of scores between the two groups on the pre-testing. Table (1) displays the means and standard deviations of scores from both groups on the pre-testing, covering sub-skills and total scores.

The pre-testing of business writing skills included the *calculation of t-values, as depicted in Table (1).*

Table (1)

t-test and significance of the business writing skills pre-testing.

Assessment	Groups	Independent Samples T-test				
		No.	Mean	SD	t value	Sig. level
business writing skills	Control group	45	5.40	2.22	0.775**	0.05
	Experimental group	45	5.80	2.66		

Table (1) indicates no significant difference between the control and experimental groups in the pre-assessment at the 0.05 significance level, with a t-value of 0.775, indicating similarities between the groups before the start of the study.

The preliminary evaluation of negotiation and persuasion skills involved the computation of t-values, as depicted in Table (2).

Table (2)
t-test and significance of the negotiation and persuasion skills pre-testing.

Assessment	Groups	Independent Samples T-test				
		No.	Mean	SD	t value	Sig. level
negotiation and persuasion skills	Control group	45	5.49	2.05	0.402	0.019
	Experimental group	45	5.69	2.62		

Table (2) exhibits that there was no notable distinction between the control and experimental groups in the initial assessment at the 0.05 significance level, as the t-value is 0.402 indicating their equivalence before the commencement of the study.

Post-Testing

Students were evaluated on their business writing skills through a post-test. They also engaged in reflective activities to assess their learning experiences. The collected data were then subjected to statistical analysis, with the results detailed below.

Results

This study investigated the impact of PBL on enhancing the business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students. Data analysis involved t-tests to make a comparison of pre-test and post-test means of scores, evaluating advancements in student performance.

Question (1)

To answer the question, ‘What are the business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills mostly needed by ESP

students at Sadat Academy for Management Sciences?’’ The essential skills were determined through the theoretical framework and existing research. These skills were then integrated into a needs assessment questionnaire, which underwent review by a panel of language experts. Their input was incorporated to refine the final version of the business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills, thereby answering the first question.

Question (2)

To address the question regarding whether there are statistically significant differences in the means of scores between the experimental and control groups on the post-test for business writing skills, a t-test was conducted. The objective was to detect any significant differences in means of the scores between the two groups following the intervention. The results of the t-test are presented in Table (3).

Table (3)

t-test and significance of the business writing skills post-testing.

Assessment	Groups	Independent Samples T-test				
		No.	Mean	SD	t value	Sig. level
business writing skills	Control group	45	5.44	2.19	13.49	0.05
	Experimental group	45	11.67	2.18		

This outcome demonstrated a statistically significant distinction between the control and experimental groups. The t-value of 13.49 indicated significance at the 0.05 level, favoring the experimental group. Therefore, the second question was resolved.

Question (3)

To address whether there are statistically significant differences in mean scores between the experimental and

control groups on the post-test for negotiation and persuasion skills, a t-test was performed. The analysis aimed to identify significant distinctions in mean scores between the two groups after the intervention. The results of the t-test are presented in Table (4).

Table (4)

t-test and significance of the negotiation and persuasion post-testing

Assessment	Groups	Independent Samples T-test				
		No.	Mean	SD	t value	Sig. level
negotiation and persuasion	Control group	45	5.44	2.04	7.33	0.05
	Experimental group	48	8.93	2.17		

This outcome showed a statistically significant distinction between the two study groups. The t-value of 7.33 indicated significance at the 0.05 level, with the experimental group showing higher scores. Thus, the third question was addressed.

Question (4)

To explore the effectiveness of PBL in improving the business writing skills of ESP students at Sadat Academy for Management Sciences, the effect size was computed using the Eta square value, as detailed in Table (5).

Table (5)

The Effect Size for the post-application of the business writing test on the experimental group

Assessment	Eta square value
Business writing	0.66

The results indicated a substantial effect size (0.66) for the post-application assessment of business writing skills in the experimental group. Thus, the fourth question was addressed.

Question (5)

To answer the question, "How effective is PBL in improving the negotiation and persuasion skills of ESP students at Sadat Academy for Management Sciences?", the effect size was calculated using the Eta square value, as shown in Table (6).

Table (6)

The Effect Size for the post-application of the negotiation and persuasion test on the experimental group

Assessment	Eta square value
negotiation and persuasion	0.71

The results indicated a high effect size (0.71) for the post-application of the negotiation and persuasion skills assessment on the experimental group. Thus, the fifth question was resolved.

Discussion

The study aimed to improve the business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills of ESP students through project-based learning. Initially, students' pre-test scores for business writing skills were unsatisfactory, highlighting an urgent need for improvement. Consequently, the sessions aimed to bridge these skill gaps. The researcher administered a pre-test for ESP business writing skills and another pre-test for negotiation and persuasion skills. The t-values analysis (0.775) for the business writing skills test and (0.402) for the negotiation and persuasion skills test showed insignificant distinctions between the mean scores of study groups, confirming their homogeneity in business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills.

At first, the sessions' objectives, outlined by the researcher, focused on using PBL to improve ESP business writing skills, moving away from traditional teaching methods. Various tasks and activities were included to enhance these skills. The study's results showed that the sessions were educationally effective in improving ESP students' business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills.

It was highly observed that PBL significantly improved ESP students' business writing negotiation and persuasion skills, emphasizing the importance of diverse activities. Students' participation in these activities helped them better understand business writing texts, engage in collaborative activities, and confidently communicate with peers. The ESP students' roles were apparent during the implementation of the PBL program sessions. They took charge of their learning by actively participating in projects, seeking information, resources, and guidance to explore project topics and solve problems independently. Collaboratively, students worked together with peers, sharing ideas, responsibilities, and tasks. They engaged in group discussions, actively listened, and built on each other's ideas to achieve common goals, focusing on effective teamwork and communication.

The significant gains observed during the sessions can be attributed to students' research efforts in gathering relevant information and data for their projects. They critically evaluated sources, analyzed information, and synthesized findings from diverse sources to inform their work. Throughout their projects, students used critical thinking and problem-solving skills. They identified challenges, generated solutions through brainstorming, and made informed decisions to overcome obstacles, thereby developing their analytical and strategic thinking abilities. Additionally, students practiced and refined their business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills through various project activities. They created written documents, participated in discussions and role-plays, and delivered presentations, all while focusing on clear and effective communication.

Students engaged in self-assessment to track their progress and learning. They took feedback from peers and the instructor into account, using it to enhance their work and understand their strengths and areas for improvement. They showed independence in their learning journey by making

decisions about project approaches, time management, and presentation of outcomes. This autonomy fostered a sense of accountability for their learning process. Students were stimulated to be creative and innovative in their projects, exploring new ideas, experimenting with different methods, and devising original solutions, highlighting the importance of innovation in achieving significant project results. By the end of each session, students provided constructive feedback to their peers, contributing to mutual learning and growth. They learned to critically evaluate others' work and give feedback respectfully, promoting a supportive and collaborative learning environment.

These roles emphasized students' active participation, collaboration, research skills, problem-solving abilities, effective communication, reflective practice, autonomy, innovation, and peer interaction within project-based learning environments. The current study's results on the business writing skills test and the negotiation and persuasion skills test favored the post-test scores. This improvement is credited to the well-structured PBL sessions and the interactive activities that enhanced students' negotiation and persuasion skills. By engaging in projects that replicate workplace scenarios, students gain a thorough understanding of professional communication standards. These findings cope with those of Turner and Scholtz (2010) and Arina (2019), who noted that integrating real-world practices into business writing curricula significantly boosts students' readiness for professional settings. Additionally, they highlighted the significance of clear and effective writing in promoting productivity and credibility in business contexts.

The findings revealed improvements in the post-test performance of the two study groups in both the business writing skills test and the negotiation and persuasion skills test in favor of the experimental group. These improvements can be attributed to the instructor's pivotal role during the PBL sessions. In the context of improving

ESP students' skills through PBL, the instructor's role was crucial for the success of this pedagogical approach. The instructor acted as a guide and mentor, providing resources, support, and feedback to foster critical thinking and problem-solving. She designed relevant projects that mirrored real-world business challenges, requiring students to use business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills. The instructor offered access to articles, case studies, tools, technologies, and connections with business professionals. Additionally, she developed assessment criteria, provided ongoing formative assessment, and gave constructive feedback to improve students' skills. The instructor motivated students, cultivated a positive learning environment, and assisted them in overcoming obstacles. Teamwork was actively encouraged. The instructor continuously evaluated and adjusted the PBL approach, engaged in self-reflection, and sought student feedback. She also assisted students in navigating cultural differences and diverse communication styles in a global business context.

The results of this study align with those of England and Nagel (2022), Richards et al. (2020), Crawford Camiciottoli (2018), Peleckiene and Peleckis (2015), and Fisher, Ury, and Patton (2011). These studies indicated that PBL was a transformative approach in ESP education, especially for business-oriented courses. Therefore, the integration of PBL in ESP courses focused on business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills providing a comprehensive educational experience. It not only enhanced linguistic competencies but also prepared students with the practical skills required for professional success. The active, student-centered nature of PBL makes it a transformative approach, supplying students with the needed tools to thrive in the business world. This pedagogical strategy underscores the importance of engaging students in meaningful, real-world tasks that foster both academic and professional growth.

Students' Reflections

Students shared their reflections on the experiment:

- *'PBL made the sessions more engaging because we were actively involved in projects rather than just listening to lectures. It felt like we were doing something meaningful'.*
- *"Working on real-world projects motivated me to learn more because I could see the direct application of what we were studying".*
- *"The projects helped me understand how to apply business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills in real situations. It wasn't just theoretical knowledge anymore".*
- *"I learned to think critically and solve problems on my own. When challenges came up, we had to brainstorm and find solutions, which improved my analytical skills".*
- *"Collaborating with my peers on projects taught me the importance of teamwork. We learned to communicate effectively, share responsibilities, and support each other".*
- *"Getting feedback from my classmates was helpful. It made me look at my work from different perspectives and improve it."*

Pedagogical Implications

The significant improvements observed in ESP students using project-based learning highlight its potential for enhancing business writing skills and preparing students for a digitally advanced world.

Educators should incorporate project-based learning into their curriculum to enhance ESP business writing skills, providing a blended learning environment that maximizes student motivation and learning outcomes.

In-class activities and group discussions facilitated by project-based learning encouraged collaborative learning, enhancing language skills, teamwork, and communication abilities. Peer feedback during group discussions allowed

students to learn from each other and gain diverse perspectives on their language use.

Teachers need to be proficient in project-based learning strategies. Professional development programs should be available to train educators on the effective use of these strategies.

Challenges

The researcher confronted some complications during the implementation of the sessions:

1. **Complex Vocabulary:** Understanding and utilizing specialized business terminology proved difficult, especially for students with lower English proficiency.
2. **Writing Skills:** Crafting professional business documents in English demanded advanced writing skills, which some students struggled to achieve.
3. **Balancing Academic and Project Work:** Managing regular coursework alongside project demands was challenging, causing stress and time management issues.
4. **Meeting Deadlines:** Adhering to project timelines and deadlines was tough, particularly when coordinating with team members.
5. **Differing Skill Levels:** Collaborating with peers who had varying levels of language proficiency and business writing skills often led to frustration and inefficiencies.
6. **Role Allocation:** Assigning tasks based on individual strengths and ensuring equal contribution was difficult.

To overcome these challenges:

Here are some effective solutions to these common issues:

1. Using glossaries, flashcards, and language apps to help students familiarize themselves with specialized business terminology. Encourage the use of business dictionaries and online resources to enhance understanding.
2. Providing regular writing practice with constructive feedback to help students improve their writing proficiency.

3. Teaching time management and organizational skills.
4. Breaking down projects into smaller, manageable tasks with clear deadlines. Provide reminders and support to help students stay on track.
5. Creating mixed-ability groups to promote peer learning and collaboration. Assigning roles based on individual strengths, allowing students to learn from each other. Providing additional support and resources for students who need extra help.
6. Clearly defining roles and responsibilities at the project's start. Using team-building exercises to help students understand their strengths and how they could contribute. Rotating roles to ensure everyone gains a variety of skills and experiences.

Conclusions

1. Students' ESP business writing, negotiation, and persuasion skills improved following the implementation of the PBL sessions, likely due to the diverse tasks and activities introduced by the researcher.
2. Students reported personal growth, including enhanced thinking, self-confidence, communication skills, and teamwork. They also appreciated the instructor's role as a facilitator of learning.
3. Incorporating project-based learning made the tasks more sociable for students.

Recommendations

According to the results of this study, the succeeding recommendations are provided.

1. Using project-based learning to improve creative writing skills among other ESP apprentices in other Faculties of Business.
2. Developing projects that reflect real-life writing tasks, such as starting a blog, writing a short story, or crafting a script for a short film.

3. Including multimedia elements (videos, podcasts, digital storytelling) to make projects more engaging and accommodate varied learning styles.
4. Conducting regular training sessions for faculty staff members on PBL principles and benefits, and how to integrate them into current curricula.
5. Designing PBL programs personalized to meet the specific needs of EFL/ESP students and educators.
6. Creating projects that match ESP students' language proficiency levels and professional goals, such as technical writing for engineering students or marketing content for business students.
7. Evaluating students' final projects using a rubric that assesses language use, creativity, collaboration, and project management.
8. Allowing students to select their project topics or certain elements of their projects, thereby boosting motivation and a sense of ownership.
9. Developing projects that necessitate critical thinking and problem-solving, prompting ESP students to pose questions, conduct research, and independently find solutions.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. Evaluating the efficacy of PBL in enhancing comprehension skills among English majors.
2. Examining the effect of PBL on improving communication and soft skills among ESP learners.
3. Investigating the usefulness of integrating PBL in teaching English language materials in Business Administration Colleges.
4. Applying PBL to enhance communication skills among secondary and preparatory school students.

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