

## Challenges in Teaching Reading Comprehension: An ESP Case in Indonesia

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### Abstract

Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) poses distinct challenges, especially regarding reading comprehension, as teachers must adapt their methods to cater to the unique needs and settings of their students, often necessitating specialized vocabulary and subject knowledge. In this research, the investigator seeks to examine educators' viewpoints on the obstacles they face in teaching reading comprehension within ESP frameworks, with the goal of pinpointing effective techniques that can boost student involvement and comprehension. A qualitative approach was utilized, incorporating surveys and discussions with numerous English language teachers from various educational institutions. The results indicate a range of challenges encountered by educators. They find it difficult to strike a balance between language teaching and industry-specific content while also dealing with administrative responsibilities and limited class time. The absence of standardized textbooks and financial resources complicates the creation of teaching materials. The diverse backgrounds of students, large class sizes, and differing proficiency levels require adaptable strategies. Insufficient institutional backing and resources aligned with industry standards impede effective teaching. This research underscores the necessity for improved support, resources, and training to enhance ESP instruction within Indonesia's higher education framework.

**Keywords:** *English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Reading Comprehension, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)*

### INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is an essential skill for learners in Indonesia, playing a vital role in their academic achievements and overall educational journey. Although many Indonesian students can read fluently, they often encounter difficulties in grasping the meaning of texts, which can be attributed to insufficient metacognitive awareness and ineffective reading strategies (Mustopa et al., 2024). EFL students in Indonesian higher education experience various obstacles regarding reading comprehension, influenced by multiple factors. A prominent concern is the students' restricted vocabulary and challenges with comprehending lengthy texts, which are frequent hurdles to effective reading comprehension (Fitria et al., 2024) (Isma & Nur, 2023). Furthermore, students frequently find it hard to comprehend sentences, a problem that is aggravated by inadequate teaching approaches that do not cater to these particular needs (Nurhayati et al., 2023). The lack of enthusiasm for reading and low motivation intensify these issues, resulting in students being less willing to participate in extensive reading activities (Luthfaturrohman, 2024) (Fitriasti et al., 2024). Additionally, the inability to deduce meaning from context and challenges in identifying the main idea or drawing inferences are common problems that obstruct comprehension (Sofa, 2023). The significance of reading habits is highlighted by

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Indonesia's low position in global assessments such as PISA, emphasizing the necessity for enhanced reading comprehension skills (Mejri, 2024). For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, the challenges in reading comprehension are heightened by difficulties in identifying main ideas, comprehending vocabulary, and connecting texts to prior knowledge (Ramadhianti & Somba, 2023). These challenges are further worsened by factors like low motivation, inadequate prior knowledge, and limited vocabulary, which adversely affect the students' academic performance and future prospects (Nanda & Azmy, 2020). Furthermore, critical thinking and the capacity to analyze literary texts are associated with reading comprehension, indicating that improving these abilities could enhance comprehension results (Ismitasari et al., 2024). Effective reading strategies, including problem-solving and global reading strategies, have been shown to correlate positively with better comprehension, emphasizing the need for strategy instruction in EFL contexts (Dardjito et al., 2023). Finally, cultural background and pedagogical approaches also play a role in the obstacles faced by learners, indicating a need for culturally responsive teaching methods (Sahmadan & Ajam, 2020).

Teaching reading understanding in Indonesia, particularly in English for Specific Purpose classes, encounters numerous challenges as emphasized by various research. One of the most urgent barriers to effective grasp of ESP materials is the notably limited vocabulary proficiency demonstrated by students, a shortcoming that significantly hinders their ability to interact with and comprehend the specialized content presented in these courses (Yasin, 2024). This specific issue is further intensified by the inadequate availability of educational resources that are specifically tailored to meet the distinct demands of various fields, thereby forcing instructors to rely on generic materials sourced from textbooks and articles that may not sufficiently address the diverse needs of their students (Solihah & Setiawan, 2023). Moreover, students often face substantial challenges in deciphering the underlying structures of the language system and in employing effective reading techniques—skills that are absolutely essential for successfully navigating and understanding complex texts presented in a foreign language context (Fitria, 2024). The diversity observed in students' linguistic abilities, combined with their varying levels of critical thinking skills, further complicates the teaching process, as educators must skillfully handle the differing levels of proficiency and motivation that exist within the classroom setting (Guntur & Rahimi, 2019). Additionally, the influence of students' cultural backgrounds, along with the prevailing pedagogical approach to English language education in Indonesia, also plays a significant role in these challenges, as these factors can deeply affect students' levels of engagement and their overall comprehension abilities (Husamaddin, 2024). In the aftermath of the pandemic, instructors specialized in ESP have additionally reported encountering substantial difficulties stemming from a lack of sufficient institutional support and an evident need for more pertinent training and resources, both of which are indispensable for effectively adapting to the rapidly changing educational landscape (Suherman & Kertawijaya, 2023). In order to surmount these daunting obstacles, it is imperative that educators embark on the development of more efficacious teaching methodologies and resources, engage in ongoing professional development initiatives, and cultivate a nurturing learning environment that actively encourages student participation and facilitates the enhancement of vocabulary acquisition (Solihah & Setiawan, 2023) (Suherman & Kertawijaya, 2023).

While previous studies have extensively addressed students' challenges in EFL reading—such as limited vocabulary, low motivation, and poor strategy use—these studies often overlook the pedagogical and institutional hurdles faced by teachers, particularly in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The present study fills this gap by focusing on Indonesian ESP educators and revealing systemic issues such as time constraints, administrative workload, lack of a standardized curriculum, and insufficient institutional support. Unlike previous works that rarely incorporate teacher voices, this research employs qualitative insights from practitioners to uncover real-world teaching complexities.

This study offers a novel contribution to ESP research in Indonesia by focusing on the often-overlooked perspective of educators rather than students. Uniquely, this research integrates pedagogical, administrative, and institutional challenges into a cohesive analysis, offering a holistic view of the complexities in teaching ESP. Additionally, the study draws on rich qualitative data from practitioners, providing authentic insights grounded in classroom realities.

Considering how important reading skills are in the learning process and how difficult it is to teach reading comprehension that is often faced by EFL teachers and lecturers, therefore, the research question of this study, what are the key challenges faced by Indonesian ESP educators in vocational and higher education contexts, and how do these challenges impact syllabus design, material development, teaching strategies, and student learning outcomes?

## METHODS

This study used a qualitative method obtaining the data collection through questionnaires and interviews. This case study is employed to discover the challenges or obstacles on teaching reading comprehension in ESP classes. The participants of the study were 11 lecturers and 6 teachers that teaching reading in ESP class. Although both programs have many courses different from one another, students from both programs are required to study various ESP two-credit courses such as English for Nursing, English for Accounting and Business, English for Information Technology, and English for Hotel Staff (Tourism), which aim at providing students with technical and language knowledge for different working environments, vocational colleges, hotels, hospitals or health center, companies, etc. where technical English is required.

Twenty-five questionnaires were delivered to lecturers and teachers in person who teach ESP in Indonesia; however, seventeen questionnaires were collected. As far as the semi-structured interview is concerned, four interviewees were conducted individually in Indonesian and recorded for later analysis. The former obtained from open-ended items in questionnaires were analyzed. The latter garnered from interviews were analyzed by using content analysis approach, i.e., by three steps, familiarizing and organizing, coding and recoding, and summarizing and interpreting. Four interviewees were coded as Lecturer 1 (L1), Lecturer 2 (L2), Teacher 1 (T1), and Teacher 2 (T2).

The theme of saturation in this qualitative research refers to the point at which no new information or insights emerge from further data collection, indicating that the research has covered the range of experiences and perspectives relevant to the study. In this investigation into the challenges of teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) within Indonesian higher education, theme saturation was attained through a cyclical approach to data gathering and analysis, which included both interviews and surveys with ESP instructors. The themes were extracted from a thorough examination of participant feedback, pinpointing recurring issues and obstacles encountered by educators in the realms of syllabus creation, material production, instructional techniques, and addressing student diversity.

Throughout the interviews and surveys, several themes consistently surfaced among various participants, indicating saturation. For instance, the difficulties in crafting effective syllabi due to time limitations, administrative burdens, and the absence of a standardized ESP framework were emphasized by numerous respondents and interviewees, making these concerns prominent throughout the data set. The theme of material production was similarly corroborated by frequent references to the lack of suitable, field-specific textbooks and the disconnect between available resources and students' skill levels. These challenges were evident in both interviews and surveys, confirming that saturation was achieved in this domain.

In addition, the theme of student diversity was another area where saturation occurred, as many participants discussed the challenges of managing large, heterogeneous classes with varying levels of

English proficiency and different age groups. These discussions were found across different responses, reflecting a common challenge that ESP educators face.

Despite the recurrence of certain themes, there were also some unique responses that provided nuanced insights into particular issues, such as the need for more ESP-focused faculty development programs (as expressed by L1) or the difficulties faced in engaging students with ESP texts that were perceived as dry or irrelevant (mentioned by L1 and T1). These unique responses added depth to the understanding of the general themes and indicated that while the main challenges were consistent, individual experiences and institutional contexts could shape how these challenges were perceived and addressed.

To ensure saturation, the researchers likely conducted multiple rounds of data collection and analysis, revisiting the data as new insights were gained. Themes that emerged from early interviews or questionnaires were continuously compared to later data to confirm their recurrence and relevance. When no significant new themes emerged and the existing ones were sufficiently supported by data from different sources, saturation was considered achieved. This approach helped ensure a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by ESP educators in Indonesia (especially in West Java).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the data analysis conducted, teachers and lecturers in Indonesia who teach English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at both vocational schools and universities encounter several challenges. These challenges can be categorized into four main areas: (a) designing an effective syllabus that aligns with students' specific needs and industry demands; (b) material development; (c) managing student diversity, which includes differences in background knowledge, learning styles, and proficiency levels; and (d) implementing suitable teaching strategies to ensure effective learning outcomes. These factors collectively contribute to the complexity of teaching ESP in Indonesia.

### Designing Effective Syllabus

Designing an effective syllabus is one of the most pressing challenges faced by ESP teachers and lecturers in Indonesia. Due to the specialized nature of ESP courses, educators must balance language instruction with industry-specific content while working within institutional constraints (Fitria, 2023). In this theme the participants discussed about time due to administrative workload and course hours. Then jargon due to language complexity and practicality. Furthermore, the support for syllabus development and standardization of ESP framework.

In the theme of designing effective syllabus, interview and questionnaire findings indicate that ESP instructors in higher education institutions in Indonesia face significant challenges. First factor contributing to this issue are the heavy administrative workload and the limited time allocation for ESP courses each semester.

L2 revealed that the burden of administrative responsibilities hampers the process of planning and developing an ideal syllabus. She expressed that she lacks sufficient time to evaluate, revise, and refine the syllabus based on feedback from students and colleagues. Her statement reflects how administrative duties often reduce the reflective time needed in academic processes—particularly in the ESP context, where course materials must be tailored to students' fields of study.

"I often have to rush through the process... administrative duties limit my ability to conduct a thorough review and revision process." (L2)

This suggests that the formulation of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) syllabus transcends a purely technical endeavor, necessitating an ample allocation of time for thorough exploration, collaborative engagement, and comprehensive evaluation. In the absence of sufficient temporal resources, the caliber of the syllabus is likely to deteriorate, as it fails to undergo an exhaustive revision process.

Concurrently, T2 emphasized that the constrained instructional hours available within a semester pose significant challenges in her efforts to reconcile the teaching of general English skills with content that is specific to the subject matter. This scenario encapsulates a prevalent obstacle in ESP pedagogy—namely, the integration of linguistic competencies with domain-specific knowledge within a severely limited timeframe.

“I often feel overwhelmed trying to fit both core English skills and subject-specific knowledge into such a limited timeframe.” (T2)

This underscores the notion that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction cannot be conflated with the pedagogy of general English language teaching. It necessitates a more calculated approach to curriculum design, accompanied by institutional backing that empowers educators to engage in more profound and systematic planning.

Both the data gathered from questionnaires and interviews with L2 and T2 participants indicate substantial structural impediments in the formulation of effective ESP curricula within Indonesian higher education, particularly in relation to the administrative burdens placed on lecturers and the constraints of limited instructional hours. These elements directly influence the caliber of syllabus development, particularly in ESP contexts that necessitate the integration of linguistic competencies with discipline-specific content.

These observations are consistent with contemporary scholarship that underscores the significance of supportive professional environments for ESP educators. Nasution et al. (2023) assert that substantial administrative responsibilities diminish lecturers' ability for pedagogical reflection and curriculum innovation, thereby resulting in hastily constructed syllabi that may insufficiently cater to the actual needs of students.

Moreover, the restricted hours allocated for ESP courses present pedagogical challenges in balancing the emphasis between general English language skills and the enhancement of vocabulary and reading comprehension relevant to particular fields. This predicament highlights the imperative for contextually relevant and adaptable ESP syllabus design, bolstered by flexible institutional policies.

The data derived from interviews and questionnaires indicate that a further significant obstacle in the development of an effective ESP syllabus is the intricacy of industry-specific language, particularly when learners possess a limited proficiency in general English. The authentic materials utilized in ESP instruction frequently encompass dense technical terminology and complex syntactic structures, rendering comprehension arduous for students who are still in the process of establishing their foundational language skills. As indicated by L1, this disparity between general English proficiency and specialized vocabulary engenders a disconnect that impedes students' ability to apply their learning in authentic professional contexts.

L1 emphasized that numerous students encounter difficulties with both the technical aspects of ESP content and their own insufficient language foundations:

“Many students struggle to understand technical terms and industry-specific language, especially when their general English proficiency is still developing.” (L1)



This discovery emphasizes the enduring challenge inherent in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction: the simultaneous requirement for students to cultivate general English proficiency while also acquiring specialized linguistic competencies pertinent to their field of study. This bifocal approach necessitates the development of meticulously selected educational materials and pedagogical strategies that are sensitive to the learners' current linguistic capabilities, whilst concurrently maintaining the integrity of content specific to the respective industries. For example, a study conducted by Ahmed et al. (2024) illustrates the complexities faced by ESP instructors as they strive to reconcile these demands, indicating that students frequently encounter difficulties in comprehending technical vocabulary without a robust grounding in general English.

Furthermore, the challenge of material applicability reveals a disconnect between the theoretical content delivered in the classroom and the pragmatic communication practices encountered in professional environments. This observation underscores the imperative for curriculum developers and educators to engage in closer collaboration with industry professionals to construct instructional resources that are firmly rooted in authentic occupational tasks. Dou and Huan (2024) highlight the significance of such partnerships, advocating for the incorporation of industry-specific insights into ESP curricula to augment their relevance and utility.

The third sub-topic that elucidates an additional challenge in the formulation of an effective ESP syllabus within Indonesian higher education pertains to the deficiency of institutional and professional support. Despite the availability of some general training programs and workshops, educators consistently report a lack of initiatives uniquely designed to address the specific requirements of ESP instruction. This deficiency obstructs their capacity to design, implement, and revise ESP syllabi that are congruent with the exigencies of industry and the academic proficiency of their students. L1 articulated concerns regarding this matter, asserting:

“There is a pressing need for more ESP-focused faculty development initiatives that provide practical strategies for syllabus design, material development, and industry integration.” (L1)

In addition to the imperative for professional development tailored to English for Specific Purposes (ESP), educators have articulated a significant deficiency in access to vital teaching resources, encompassing textbooks, online platforms, and financial assistance. Based on the data derived from the administered questionnaire, four lecturers and one instructor distinctly indicated that the constraints imposed by resource inadequacies directly hindered their capacity to formulate high-quality syllabi. These observations are consistent with contemporary scholarly discourse which posits that the development of educational materials is frequently undermined by insufficient institutional funding (Prasongko, 2023).

This dearth of support curtails innovation in syllabus formulation, obstructs the incorporation of contemporary and contextually pertinent materials, and diminishes the potential for collaboration with industry experts—all of which are pivotal for the efficacy of an ESP program.

The findings corroborate prior research that underscores the paramount importance of institutional infrastructure and support in the effective execution of ESP initiatives (Wahyuningsih, 2018). Given that ESP instruction necessitates both pedagogical acumen and domain-specific expertise, educators require access not only to instructional tools but also to ongoing professional development opportunities that are directly pertinent to ESP.

Furthermore, the investment from institutions in ESP programs remains markedly deficient, culminating in an overwhelming burden on educators who are compelled to undertake complex syllabus design with minimal guidance, support, or resources. This predicament jeopardizes the quality and sustainability of ESP instruction, particularly when educators are concurrently tasked with managing administrative responsibilities and large cohorts of students.

Last point of sub-topic in this theme also talks the standardization of ESP framework. The data reveals a recurring challenge in the development of ESP syllabi across Indonesian higher education institutions—the absence of a standardized ESP framework. This lack of uniformity leads to significant inconsistencies in curriculum design, course content, and learning outcomes. Both questionnaire responses and interview data support the view that a standardized framework is critical for improving the quality, coherence, and relevance of ESP instruction. T1 emphasized this concern, stating:

“Without a clear guideline, every institution—and sometimes even individual lecturers—designs their own ESP syllabus, leading to significant variations in course content and learning outcomes.”

The results are consistent with the prevailing scholarly discourse, which posits that the standardization of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum design facilitates both educational equity and the assurance of quality (Suherman, 2023). Discrepancies in practices among various institutions not only obstruct students' learning trajectories but also culminate in disparate levels of preparedness for professional communication within their designated fields. Furthermore, when educators independently formulate syllabi without institutional collaboration, it can lead to redundancies, misaligned objectives, and suboptimal utilization of instructional time.

A standardized ESP framework would furnish a coherent blueprint for educators, guaranteeing that fundamental competencies—such as academic writing, technical vocabulary, and discipline-specific communication—are systematically addressed. As highlighted in several studies (Umar & Basuki, 2023; Agzamovna, 2024), a structured yet flexible framework is imperative for reconciling the discrepancies between educational paradigms and the communicative exigencies of the workplace.

To augment the quality and sustainability of ESP programs, higher education institutions ought to implement a series of strategic initiatives. Primarily, a reassessment of instructors' workloads is vital to ensure that they possess sufficient time for the formulation, evaluation, and refinement of syllabi. Prolonging the duration of ESP courses or embedding ESP within interdisciplinary curricula can also facilitate broader learning coverage while preventing the overburdening of limited class time. Moreover, the provision of regular professional development opportunities—such as specialized training and workshops centered on ESP syllabus development—can equip educators with pragmatic tools for aligning linguistic instruction with discipline-specific content. Lastly, the creation of flexible and modular educational resources can assist instructors in designing efficient and adaptable syllabi. Collectively, these initiatives can cultivate a more supportive and effective context for ESP instruction.

### **Material Development and Teaching Strategies**

The development of instructional materials and pedagogical strategies significantly influences the efficacy of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) education within Indonesian higher education institutions. Nonetheless, educators frequently encounter difficulties in these domains. The primary concern pertains to the absence of standardized ESP textbooks, which results in a misalignment between the materials available and the specific needs of students. Numerous textbooks do not correspond with the language proficiency levels of students or the demands of various industries, thereby complicating lecturers' efforts to deliver pertinent and practical learning experiences. Moreover, the pedagogical approaches employed in reading comprehension present additional challenges. A considerable number of students' exhibit difficulties stemming from limited reading strategies, often depending on a literal word-for-word translation instead of employing more effective techniques such as skimming and scanning. In addition, issues related to motivation and engagement emerge due to the complexity and perceived difficulty associated with ESP texts, diminishing students' inclination to actively engage in the learning process. Finally,

the effective assessment of reading comprehension remains a significant challenge, as conventional evaluation methods may fail to accurately gauge students' understanding of both linguistic and specialized content.

The first issue in this theme discussed about textbooks. The findings indicate that one of the major obstacles faced by ESP educators in Indonesian higher education is the lack of standardized, field-appropriate textbooks. This challenge is particularly pronounced for those teaching students in engineering, science, and other specialized disciplines where technical reading comprehension is essential. As shared by L1, currently available textbooks are often either too generic or overly technical, failing to balance foundational English skills with relevant industry-specific content. L1 highlighted that most materials are not tailored to the proficiency level of EFL learners, which leads to difficulties in comprehension:

“Many resources are designed for native speakers or assume a higher level of proficiency than my students have.” (L1)

Additionally, the data from both interviews and questionnaires point to challenges in teaching strategies, particularly in maintaining student motivation and engagement. ESP texts are frequently perceived as dry or irrelevant, reducing enthusiasm and learning effectiveness. L1 and T1 noted that students often view ESP as a mandatory course rather than a meaningful component of their academic and professional development. L2 further articulated that although interactive methodologies, including case studies and role-playing, exhibit significant potential, their execution is frequently complex, and the evaluation of their efficacy continues to be ambiguous.

These empirical findings align with prior scholarly investigations emphasizing that both the content of textbooks and the pedagogical methodologies employed substantially impact the learning outcomes associated with English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Suharyanto, 2024; Sasabone et al., 2023). The absence of authentic and standardized instructional materials contributes to a disjointed pedagogical approach and leads to variability in assessment practices. Instructors are frequently compelled to select or develop their own educational content, which, although potentially advantageous, is labor-intensive and may lack coherence or congruity with the overarching objectives of the academic program.

Moreover, the findings reinforce the assertion that the implementation of effective ESP instructional strategies necessitates a degree of adaptability. As posited by Rahmawati & Mar'an (2024), student-centered pedagogies—which integrate real-world contexts and practical applications—can significantly enhance learner engagement; however, these methodologies demand adequate training, meticulous planning, and requisite resources. In the absence of sufficient institutional backing, the full realization of these pedagogical strategies within classroom environments may remain unachieved.

The third sub-topic within this thematic discourse elucidates that pedagogical strategies employed in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) present additional challenges for educators within Indonesian higher education, particularly concerning the sustenance of student engagement and motivation in relation to reading comprehension assessments and practices. Responses obtained from questionnaires and qualitative data from interviews indicate that students frequently regard ESP texts as monotonous, intricate, or lacking relevance, which culminates in diminished interest and suboptimal learning outcomes. Interviewee L2 highlighted the variability in the effectiveness of instructional strategies across disparate student cohorts: “Strategies that work for one group of students may not be effective for another... the lack of enthusiasm from some students makes it even more difficult.”

In conjunction with engagement-related concerns, both L2 and T1 identified the difficulty of evaluating reading comprehension in the absence of standardized or authentic English for



Specific Purposes (ESP) materials. The inconsistency and mismatch of resources hinder both instruction and fair evaluation. T1 summarized the pedagogical dilemma by stating: “It’s a constant challenge to balance engagement and effective learning... Reading comprehension assessment is also tricky because most textbooks lack authenticity.” These findings underscore the pedagogical complexity of ESP instruction, where educators must balance language development, domain-specific knowledge, and student motivation. The reported variability in strategy effectiveness highlights the need for differentiated instruction—an approach where teaching is adapted based on student interest, readiness, and learning profiles (Rahmawati & Mar’an, 2024).

As suggested by Triastuti et al. (2023), interactive and student-centered activities (e.g., simulations, group discussions, and digital media integration) can offer solutions, but their success heavily depends on teacher skill, institutional support, and students’ English proficiency. Indeed, the student-centered activities will help students to explore more strategies that fit with them to enhance their reading comprehension ability. Therefore, for the English educators, it is recommended to use reading comprehension through Read, Cover, Remember and Retell (RCRR) strategy to teach reading comprehension in their classes because it can improve the students’ reading comprehension ability (Marpaung & Sinaga, 2019).

In addition, a study conducted by El Arboui (2024), she discussed the use of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in ESP for business class. She recommended to use this approach because it engages students in tasks that are pertinent to their academic and professional needs. Educators in this study expressed frustration not only with the lack of engaging strategies, but also with the absence of authentic, standardized textbooks—a recurring theme across the dataset. This dual obligation necessitates that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) educators consistently re-evaluate, modify, and evaluate their instructional materials, a process that may prove to be labor-intensive and untenable in the absence of institutional support.

In order to enhance the quality and sustainability of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction within Indonesian higher education institutions, it is imperative that these entities prioritize the creation of standardized and proficiency-appropriate textbooks specifically designed for distinct academic disciplines and learner competency levels. The incorporation of authentic materials that accurately represent real-world professional environments can significantly elevate student engagement and enhance reading comprehension. Furthermore, it is essential for educators to receive comprehensive training in differentiated instructional strategies to effectively address the diverse needs of students, alongside support for imparting efficient reading techniques such as skimming and scanning. The adoption of interactive, student-centered pedagogical methods, including simulations and discussions, can further augment the learning experience, contingent upon the provision of adequate resources and manageable class sizes. Additionally, the formulation of equitable and authentic assessment instruments is crucial for the precise evaluation of students’ linguistic abilities and domain-specific understanding. Lastly, institutional support is vital for the effective management of lecturer workloads and the continuous development of ESP instructional materials.

## Student Diversity

The information gathered from the surveys and interviews reveals that the diversity among students poses a significant challenge in the instruction of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). This diversity encompasses large classroom numbers, extensive age differences, and varying degrees of English language skills. The presence of large classes hinders instructors from delivering personalized support and efficiently tracking the progress of each learner. As noted by L1:

“With so many students in one class, providing individualized attention becomes nearly impossible. Some students grasp the material quickly, while others struggle, making it difficult to maintain a balanced pace that works for everyone.”

Age differences among students also impact the learning process. Younger students tend to adapt more easily to new learning methods, while older students may face challenges with digital tools and modern pedagogical techniques. As L2 stated:

“The age gap among students impacts their engagement with the course, as fresh high school graduates and older students with academic gaps have different learning approaches.”

The varying degrees of English proficiency present a considerable obstacle. Some learners possess a robust command of the language, while others grapple with fundamental sentence constructions. This disparity complicates the creation of a curriculum that caters to all students.

The heterogeneity in ESP classrooms regarding age, educational experience, and language skills necessitates that teachers employ more flexible and responsive pedagogical strategies. The challenge is intensified by large class sizes, which restrict the ability to offer individualized instruction. In the realm of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), where learning is centered on applying language in particular professional and industry contexts, deficiencies in students' foundational English abilities can impede the overall attainment of educational goals (Nabung et al., 2024; Suherman & Kertawijaya, 2023).

Having students with both high and low levels of proficiency in one classroom compels instructors to adopt differentiated teaching methods, as illustrated by L2, who utilizes texts of varying complexity to address the diverse needs of learners (Hasanzadeh & Gholami, 2023). Approaches like collaborative activities, peer instruction, and the blending of basic and advanced resources provide alternatives, yet they come with their own limitations.

Additionally, age variations significantly affect students' preferences for learning and their digital skills. Younger learners typically adapt more easily to digital platforms and contemporary teaching techniques, whereas older students frequently find it challenging to keep pace with advancements in educational technology (Sarifa & Jabeen, 2024). This situation requires lecturers not only to manage content effectively but also to consider inclusive teaching approaches that cater to students across different age groups.

To address the diverse needs of students in ESP classes, lecturers should implement differentiated instruction strategies, such as tiered tasks, varied learning activities, and formative assessments. Managing large classes can be improved through methods like flipped classrooms, small group discussions, and peer feedback to enhance individual engagement. In supporting this idea, where educators need to make group learning for students, Katemba (2025) in her study shows that group annotation is more effective than individual annotation in improving reading comprehension because it promotes better teamwork, motivation, and a deeper grasp of the material. Furthermore, adaptable and versatile materials enable students with lower proficiency to concentrate on essential skills while more advanced learners delve into intricate subjects. Educational institutions should also offer training in teaching methods for handling classrooms with diverse age groups, including the incorporation of accessible technology for students who are less accustomed to digital resources. Finally, the introduction of placement assessments and the provision of remedial English courses prior to students joining ESP programs can aid in closing proficiency gaps and fostering more effective learning experiences.

## CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that the instruction of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Indonesian vocational and higher education settings encounters notable challenges. These challenges can be classified into four main areas: syllabus creation, resource development, student variability, and the execution of effective teaching methods. Among these, crafting an effective syllabus is identified as the most intricate issue. Instructors contend with restricted course durations, administrative responsibilities, and the necessity to combine general English skills with specialized content relevant to industries. Additionally, the lack of a uniform ESP framework leads to discrepancies in syllabus creation and educational outcomes. The deficiency of institutional backing in terms of training, collaboration, and resources further intensifies these problems, hindering innovation and alignment with industry needs.

Resource creation and teaching methodologies also present significant obstacles. ESP instructors frequently encounter a lack of suitable, standardized textbooks, which hampers their capacity to deliver practical, field-specific training. Consequently, students face challenges with motivation and understanding due to a disconnect between the complexity of materials and their language skills. Teaching methods that enhance engagement, such as case studies and simulations, show promise but require appropriate training and institutional support for successful application.

The diversity among students, which includes differences in language skills, age, and learning styles, further complicates the teaching process. Large class sizes and the presence of both beginners and advanced learners necessitate tailored instruction and inclusive teaching strategies.

In summary, this study underscores the urgent need for institutional reforms, professional development, standardized frameworks, and resource allocation to tackle the complex challenges of ESP instruction in Indonesia. Such initiatives are essential for nurturing effective and sustainable ESP teaching approaches.

In light of these conclusions, future research should investigate several promising avenues. Firstly, longitudinal studies could examine how modifications in institutional policies (such as reduced administrative burdens or prolonged course lengths) impact the quality of ESP syllabus creation and student success. Secondly, design-based research (DBR) may be employed to collaboratively develop and assess standardized yet adaptable ESP frameworks suitable for various institutions and fields.

Moreover, future inquiries might evaluate the effectiveness of differentiated instruction and digital teaching methods in diverse, large ESP classrooms, particularly in bridging generational learning gaps. Exploring how authentic materials co-created with industry professionals affect learner motivation and domain-specific skills would also be insightful. Finally, additional research on task-based language teaching (TBLT) and reading comprehension strategies, such as RCRR and group annotation, could offer practical models for engaging ESP learners with differing proficiency levels and interests.

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