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Barriers to teaching English for specific purposes (ESP): a case from a private school in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated teachers' barriers when providing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction to airline staff students at a private high school. The research methodology used in this examination was qualitative, adopting a case study approach. The current study employed a purposive sampling strategy to recruit two English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers who instruct Airline Staff in English as participants. The data were gathered through interviews and then evaluated and presented in a descriptive manner using theme analysis. The study unveiled that educators experienced diverse obstacles when instructing English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The problems included: a) the requirement for a proper textbook tailored to the specific discipline, b) the build-up of English language practice among students, and c) the necessity for more vocabulary relevant to their academic field

Keywords: Airline Staff, Barriers in ESP, Private School, Teaching ESP

Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a specialized area of language instruction that concentrates on meeting learners' distinct linguistic and communicative requirements in specific academic, professional, or vocational settings (Rus, 2020). As outlined in the literature, ESP is an educational strategy that focuses on the needs of individual students and tries to enhance their communication abilities in specific areas of study or professional contexts (Dugošija, 2021; Rus, 2020). ESP adopts a learner-centered approach by aligning content and methods with specific goals through needs analysis. This ensures practical language applications, enhancing relevance and engagement in learners' educational experiences.

The field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is gaining increasing significance in the dynamic language education landscape. It is designed to tailor language instruction to the unique needs and demands of specific professional or academic domains. However, the successful implementation of ESP programs has its challenges. Educators and institutions often need help with various obstacles, from resource constraints to student motivation, that can hinder the effectiveness and success of these specialized language courses.

Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a challenging endeavor that requires effectively overcoming linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical obstacles. An essential obstacle is in ESP learners' varied requirements and anticipations, who originate from a broad spectrum of academic and professional backgrounds (Dugošija, 2021). Comprehending and appropriately dealing with these diverse requirements is essential, and it necessitates a versatile and adjustable approach to designing the curriculum and instructional techniques (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

The varied requirements and backgrounds of ESP learners present an additional challenge. ESP disciplines typically serve a diverse student body, each with different levels of language proficiency, learning preferences, and specific goals. Meeting these diverse demands within a single course can be a daunting task for the instructor (Dugošija, 2021; Zahedpisheh et al., 2017). The lack of a standardized curriculum and tailored teaching materials for certain subjects can further complicate the course design process.

Limited training and professional development opportunities available for ESP teachers are also barriers they face in the field. Many ESP instructors may not have received specialized training in needs analysis, syllabus design, or using authentic materials in their respective fields (Dugošija, 2021; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). It can lead to a disconnect between the course content and the learners' real-world language requirements. Non-native English teachers in Indonesia also struggle with limited training in effective ESP pedagogy and inadequate access to quality instructional materials tailored to their student's needs (Wahyuningsih et al., 2023). Learners often struggle to meet specific communication demands due to reliance on generic materials that lack specialized vocabulary. Addressing this requires thorough needs analysis and collaboration between subject experts and educators for effective ESP program design.

ESP teachers face obstacles in their sector because they need more training and professional development opportunities. It is possible that numerous ESP instructors have not had specific training in requirements analysis, curriculum creation, or the utilization of authentic materials in their respective areas of expertise (Dugošija, 2021; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). It can lead to a lack of alignment between the course material and the learners' practical language needs.

Non-native English instructors in Indonesia have challenges due to insufficient training in efficient English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching methods and a lack of quality instructional materials customized to their students' requirements (Wahyuningsih et al., 2023).

The importance of teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has grown significantly in Indonesia due to the country's ongoing integration with the global economy and workforce (Habibi et al., 2018). However, implementing efficient ESP education has proven difficult, especially for non-native English-speaking teachers in the Indonesian setting. Monny and Pratiwi (2021) conducted a case study examining the obstacles faced when teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in a private school in Indonesia, highlighting the urgent need for improvement in ESP education in the country.

Indonesian students frequently need more exposure to English beyond the confines of the classroom, which hinders their ability to cultivate fluency and confidence in the language (Monny & Pratiwi, 2021). Moreover, students' enthusiasm to acquire knowledge in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can be impeded by prevailing apathy or a perceived lack of significance to their personal circumstances (Khalida & Refnaldi, 2020).

Fitria's (2020) research on the design of ESP materials is particularly relevant as it focuses on practical, goal-oriented activities. These activities are aimed at enhancing students' English language proficiency, thereby preparing them for the rigors of the professional world. Other studies, such as Kamaruddin et al. (2021) and Nugroho (2020), examined the difficulties associated with teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in an accounting program based on the perspectives of the teachers. Due to this, prior research has examined the barriers

encountered in various academic disciplines and at the university level. Previous research has shown that studies need to examine teachers' barriers when teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to airline staff, especially at private vocational high schools.

Research Methods

This study gathered data through interviews using qualitative research methodology. Cohen et al. (2018) assert that a qualitative study primarily focuses on gathering and evaluating non-numerical data. This study employed qualitative methods to determine the challenges teachers encountered in the classroom when instructing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to airline staff. This study utilized a case study approach integrated into the research design. Creswell (2012) defines a case study as a research approach that thoroughly investigates a single subject, with a particular emphasis on a distinct case or boundary structure. This may entail observing an event, activity, process, or one or more objects. Therefore, the current study utilized in-depth interviews as a research methodology. Data will be collected in this phase by interviewing two English teachers teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) for airline staff.

The study included the participation of two English teachers employed at private vocational high schools throughout the academic year 2023–2024. The teachers shared their perspectives on teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the classroom and the barriers faced in ESP lessons. The participants for this study were selected using purposive sampling, a rigorous and dependable technique frequently used in qualitative research. Utilizing purposeful sampling is helpful as it identifies scenarios that provide a wealth of information that can be carefully examined. Patton (1990) defines cases with a significant amount of information as

information-rich. This study utilized interview items derived from Solihah, Kartika, and Setiawan (2023).

Furthermore, these participants were chosen because they possess specific expertise and experience relevant to the study's focus. Their backgrounds ensure that they can provide detailed insights into the research topic, making them ideal candidates for gathering valuable data. These participants are also familiar with the research context, further enriching the quality of the findings. By selecting participants who are most likely to offer substantial information, the research is better positioned to uncover meaningful patterns and outcomes that align with the study's objectives. The interview data were analyzed and interpreted using thematic analysis.

Results and Discussion

The interview data obtained from the English teachers was utilized to identify the difficulties associated with teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The interviews consisted of seven questions posed directly to the English teachers.

Teachers' Perspectives on Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

Question 1 concerns how teachers view the concept of ESP. The responses provided by the teachers' representatives are below.

> "*The primary objective of teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is to provide English language instruction to students with a specific professional or academic focus, rather than on mastering grammar. The aim is to deliver English material relevant to their field of study or work."* (Teacher 1)

> *"It diverges from the General English materials. The primary objective of ESP is to establish a connection between the language lesson and a specific situation. The objective is to appropriately utilize language in the specific contexts that students commonly face".* (Teacher 2)

The interview answers reflected the teachers' perspectives on teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a unique challenge for teachers who are often accustomed to teaching English in a more general context. Hans and Hans (2015) support teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) by comparing it to teaching general English. They assumed that teaching ESP focuses on instructing language usage within specific contexts rather than emphasizing grammar and textual structure. Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) enables teachers to acquire, engage in dialogue about, and apply knowledge about certain domains. Teachers enhance their English proficiency by applying it in circumstances relevant to their expertise. This approach fosters practical language use and connects linguistic skills with real-world demands. Tailored lessons boost students' confidence and effectiveness, but teachers must adapt and broaden their knowledge to meet diverse needs.

Require Suitable Textbooks and Resources for Instructing English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Questions 2 and 3 refer to the second outcome regarding obstacles in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP), specifically the issue of unsuitable textbooks for various academic disciplines. The responses from the teachers are as follows:

> *"Students should be provided with English textbooks specifically tailored to their major to enhance their vocabulary in their field of study".* (Teacher 1)

> *"Although downloadable textbooks are available online, specific fields still require us to develop our own textbooks. Additionally, textbooks tailored explicitly for airline crews are still scarce. Ultimately, I faced challenges locating a suitable textbook, so I compiled resources from several sources".* (Teacher 2)

Based on the responses, the limited sources of ESP textbook could potentially hinder the teaching of ESP. Given the scarcity of resources, teachers must engage in preparatory work before teaching ESP, which involves locating the appropriate textbook or articles about the various subject areas. Fitria's study (2020) supports the notion that ESP teachers have challenges related to the quality of textbooks. She mentioned that numerous ESP textbooks provide resources for enhancing English proficiency in particular domains, but locating these tools might take much work. It stimulates the teachers to employ creativity in crafting ESP materials utilizing the necessary textbooks and articles. Ibrahim's study (2019) posits that the dearth of ESP materials is the primary factor impeding the instruction of ESP. He asserted that the teachers can handle ESP materials utilizing either self-made or commercially produced resources. Consequently, it enables teachers to organize ESP resources for their subjects without restrictions.

Moreover, the absence of standardized textbooks forces teachers to adapt the content to meet students' specific needs, making teaching more complex. As a result, teachers need to be creative and flexible, often combining different materials to suit their students' disciplines.

Teachers' Experience in Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

The teachers' feedback on their experience teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can be summarized as follows:

> *"Teaching ESP presents a substantial challenge within the domain of English language instruction. A major concern for educators is the need for instructional materials, while another barrier is the necessity for students to acquire specialized*

vocabulary in their specific areas of study. Hence, it is essential to attain considerable vocabulary mastery in the area of study". (Teacher 1)

"Understanding the language itself presents a significant challenge. Students are encouraged to understand the context of the language while confronting the challenge of practicing it". (Teacher 2)

A strong command of vocabulary is essential when teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as indicated by the responses. Enesi et al. (2021) propose that incorporating specialized vocabulary into ESP instruction can enhance students' understanding of the subject matter. Sukarni's study (2020) confirms that vocabulary is a key factor in acquiring English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It

improves student communication skills in ESP contexts. Sukarni further asserts that students can enhance their language proficiency by using ESP materials. Teaching ESP helps develop students' vocabulary, particularly in terms related to their field of study. Therefore, the vocabulary taught is directly linked to the instructional materials provided by the instructors during ESP courses.

Optimizing teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) through effective strategies teachers employ.

Based on the analysis of Questions 5 and 6, this result elucidates how teachers create educational materials and employ instructional methods for English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The interview results are as stated:

"Supply ESP books according to student demand, participate in ESP webinars, or get ESP coaching." (Teacher 1)

> *"Teachers should integrate many strategies into their instructional procedures based on the context, learner characteristics, and needs analysis. Demonstrating real-life situations can significantly benefit the students. I specifically implemented a student-centered approach in the classroom".* (Teacher 2)

Based on the provided responses, it is necessary for teachers to enhance their teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) by participating in seminars, training sessions, and workshops. According to Ahmed (2014), ESP teachers can enhance their essential knowledge by receiving training that caters to the specific needs of their students. He emphasized that training is crucial for students to enhance their proficiency in specific domains and to comprehend ESP materials relevant to their vocation. According to Cenaj (2015), the issue with ESP teachers

is a need for more training. He stated that the ESP teachers needed familiarity with the training activities, which hindered their ability to create ESP materials. This implies that ESP teachers should easily identify and understand the movements associated with ESP training.

Furthermore, Ho (2011) asserted that teachers encountered the challenge of determining the most effective approach for teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP). This means that the teachers utilize a specific teaching approach to adapt the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction materials. Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an instructional method that focuses on the needs and interests of the students, as advocated by Hutchinson and Waters in 1987. Thus, it prioritizes the students' requirements, allowing teachers to incorporate genuine

content into teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP). These products assist students in directing their attention toward their areas of expertise.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and analysis, teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) poses significant challenges for teachers. ESP involves the application of English in specific fields, requiring learners to develop proficiency tailored to their disciplines. This proficiency enables students to effectively use English in future professional settings. Teaching and learning ESP focus on language skills designed for specialized professional domains. According to the interview findings, challenges faced by teachers include a lack of ESP resources and suitable textbooks, students' limited vocabulary, and insufficient specialized knowledge. Therefore,

this study suggests that educators adopt innovative methods to deliver effective ESP instruction and ensure content aligns with students' needs. Teachers can explore new pedagogical strategies and develop resources to enhance students' proficiency in specialized areas.

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