



ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEEDS OF INDONESIAN TEACHERS IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS: TOWARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ESP COURSE

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ABSTRACT

The increasing demand for English-medium instruction in international schools has highlighted the importance of English proficiency among teachers. However, many Indonesian teachers have limited opportunities to develop professional English skills required in international educational settings. This study aims to investigate the English language needs of Indonesian teachers working in international schools and to formulate recommendations for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course development. A descriptive quantitative design was employed. Thirty-five teachers from international schools participated in the study. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that speaking was the most important skill required by teachers, followed by writing, listening, and reading. The participants frequently used English for classroom instruction, classroom management, communication with parents, professional meetings, and report writing. Furthermore, teachers reported challenges in explaining complex concepts, conducting spontaneous classroom interactions, and writing formal academic reports. Based on these findings, four ESP modules are proposed, namely Classroom English, Instructional Communication, Parent-Teacher Communication, and Professional Writing. The study highlights the importance of designing ESP programs that address authentic workplace communication needs.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, Needs Analysis, International Schools, Teachers, Course Development

A. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has significantly transformed the educational landscape worldwide, particularly through the rapid expansion of international schools where English functions as the primary medium of instruction. In Indonesia, the number of international schools continues to increase, reflecting the growing demand for global-standard education and international curricula. This



development has created new professional demands for teachers, requiring them to use English not only for delivering classroom instruction but also for interacting with students, colleagues, school administrators, and parents. Effective communication in such settings requires teachers to possess both linguistic competence and professional communication skills suited to educational contexts. However, despite the increasing expectations for English proficiency, many Indonesian teachers still receive language training that mainly emphasizes General English rather than occupational-specific communication. This mismatch often leads to difficulties in explaining subject materials, managing classroom interaction, conducting meetings, and communicating professionally within the school environment.

The problem addressed in this study lies in the limited alignment between existing English training programs and the actual communicative needs of teachers in international schools. Many teachers struggle to perform professional tasks effectively in English because the language instruction they have received does not adequately prepare them for authentic workplace communication. This issue becomes increasingly important as English proficiency directly influences teaching effectiveness, classroom management, and professional collaboration. If teachers are not equipped with appropriate English communication skills, the quality of instruction and educational services in international schools may be affected.

To address this issue, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) offers a relevant framework because it focuses on developing language skills based on learners' specific professional needs. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) define ESP as an approach in which all decisions regarding content and method are based on the learners' reasons for learning. Similarly, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) emphasize that needs analysis is the fundamental step in ESP course design because it identifies the actual language demands faced by learners in their professional environments. Brown (2016) and Basturkmen (2010) further explain that needs analysis helps course developers create instructional materials that reflect real-world language use and target learners' practical needs. In the context of international schools, this means identifying the communicative tasks teachers perform and the specific language competencies they require.

Although previous studies have examined ESP needs in various professional sectors such as nursing, tourism, and business, research focusing specifically on teachers in international schools remains limited. Most existing studies emphasize students' English learning needs rather than teachers' professional communication requirements. This creates a research gap, particularly in the Indonesian context where international education continues to expand rapidly. Understanding teachers' English language needs is essential because they play a central role in delivering quality education and facilitating effective communication in multilingual educational environments.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the English language needs of teachers in international schools by identifying the language skills they require, the professional communication tasks they perform, and the challenges they encounter when using English in their workplace. The



findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more effective ESP programs tailored to teachers' professional contexts, ultimately improving both teacher performance and educational quality in international school settings.

B. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to identify and analyze the English language needs of teachers in international schools. According to Creswell (2014), descriptive quantitative research is appropriate for describing trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. This design was considered suitable because the study aimed to measure teachers' perceptions regarding their professional English language needs and communication challenges in workplace settings.

The participants of this study consisted of 35 Indonesian teachers working in international schools, selected using purposive sampling. According to Sugiyono (2019), purposive sampling is a technique used to select participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The criteria in this study included teachers who actively use English as part of their professional duties in international school environments.

The primary instrument used in this study was a questionnaire consisting of 25 items divided into four sections: English language skills needs (8 items), professional communication tasks (8 items), challenges in using English (6 items), and expectations for ESP course development (3 items). The questionnaire was adapted from the needs analysis framework proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), with modifications to fit the context of teachers working in international schools. The adaptation process involved adjusting the wording and content of the items to reflect authentic communication tasks in educational settings such as classroom instruction, meetings, report writing, and parent-teacher communication.

Before data collection, the questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability. Content validity was evaluated by two experts in English language teaching and ESP to ensure the relevance and clarity of the items. According to Brown (2016), expert judgment is an important procedure in validating language assessment instruments. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, and the result showed a coefficient of 0.87, indicating high reliability, as suggested by Cronbach (1951), where a reliability coefficient above 0.70 is considered acceptable.

The questionnaire was distributed online using Google Forms to facilitate data collection. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five selected participants to gain deeper insights into their professional communication experiences and challenges. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), semi-structured interviews allow researchers to explore participants' perspectives while maintaining flexibility during data collection.

After collecting the data, questionnaire responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Mean scores were calculated to determine the level of importance of each English language skill and professional communication task. The interpretation of mean scores followed the scale adapted from Likert scale analysis guidelines. Furthermore, interview data were transcribed, categorized, and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns related to teachers' language challenges and professional communication needs. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data provided a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' English language needs in international school contexts.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants

Category	Frequency
Male	12
Female	23
Primary School Teachers	18
Secondary School Teachers	17
Total	35

Table 2. Scale Interpretation

Mean Score	Interpretation
4.21 - 5.00	Very Important
3.41 – 4.20	Important
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate
1.81 – 2.60	Low
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

English Skills Required by Teachers

Table 3 presents the level of importance of English language skills required by teachers in international schools.

Table 3. Importance of English Skills

Skill	Mean
Speaking	4.76
Writing	4.45
Listening	4.28
Reading	4.12

The findings in Table 3 show that all four English language skills were categorized as important to very important for teachers working in international schools. Speaking obtained the highest mean score (4.76), indicating that it is considered the most essential skill in teachers' professional duties. This result reflects the nature of teaching activities, where oral communication is continuously used for delivering lessons, giving instructions, asking and answering questions, facilitating classroom discussions, and providing immediate feedback to students. The high score suggests that teachers rely heavily on spoken English as the primary tool for effective classroom interaction.

Writing ranked second with a mean score of 4.45, which also falls into the "very important" category. This finding indicates that teachers frequently engage in writing-related tasks such as preparing lesson plans, writing student evaluations, composing emails, and producing academic reports. Writing is important not only for documentation but also for maintaining professional communication with school administrators and parents.

Listening received a mean score of 4.28, showing that it remains a highly important skill in teachers' professional environments. Teachers need strong listening skills to understand students' questions, participate in meetings, follow instructions from administrators, and communicate effectively with colleagues and parents. Effective listening also supports classroom management because teachers must respond appropriately to students' needs and classroom situations.

Reading had the lowest mean score (4.12), although it is still categorized as important. This suggests that while reading may not be used as intensively as speaking or writing in daily classroom interactions, it remains necessary for understanding curriculum materials, instructional resources, school policies, and professional development documents. Overall, the findings indicate that productive skills, particularly speaking and writing, are prioritized more than receptive skills in teachers' professional contexts.

Professional Communication Tasks

Table 4 presents the professional communication tasks that require English use in international schools.

Table 4. Professional Tasks Requiring English

Task	Mean
Giving instructions	4.88
Explaining content	4.84
Classroom management	4.78
Parent communication	4.67
Meetings	4.55
Report writing	4.49

The findings in Table 4 reveal that all professional communication tasks were rated highly important by the participants, with mean scores above 4.40. Giving instructions obtained the highest mean score (4.88), indicating that this is the most frequent and essential communication task for teachers. This finding highlights the importance of clear, direct, and effective instructional language in classroom settings. Teachers are expected to deliver instructions that are easy to understand to ensure smooth classroom activities and student engagement.

Explaining content ranked second with a mean score of 4.84, showing that teachers regularly use English to present and clarify academic materials. This task requires not only language proficiency but also the ability to simplify complex concepts and adjust explanations according to students' levels of understanding. Classroom management followed closely with a mean score of 4.78, emphasizing the importance of managing student behavior, maintaining discipline, and organizing classroom activities through effective English communication.

Parent communication also received a high mean score (4.67), suggesting that teachers often use English to discuss students' progress, behavior, and academic development with parents. This task requires professional and polite language use, particularly during formal meetings or written communication. Meetings scored 4.55, indicating that teachers are actively involved in professional discussions with colleagues and administrators. Lastly, report writing obtained a mean score of 4.49, showing that written professional documentation remains an important part of teachers' responsibilities.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that classroom-related communication tasks dominate teachers' professional activities, particularly those requiring immediate spoken interaction. However, administrative and professional writing tasks also play a significant role in their work.

Challenges in Using English

The interview data revealed several challenges experienced by teachers when using English in their professional duties. The first challenge was explaining complex concepts clearly and accurately. Many participants reported that they often struggled to simplify difficult subject materials into understandable English without losing the intended meaning. This challenge became more significant when teaching abstract or technical topics.

The second challenge was spontaneous communication. Teachers stated that responding immediately to unexpected questions from students often caused difficulties because it required quick thinking, accurate vocabulary selection, and confidence in speaking. Some participants mentioned that although they understood the topic well, they sometimes found it difficult to express their ideas fluently in English under time pressure.

The third challenge involved formal writing. Teachers explained that writing student reports, composing formal emails, and preparing official school documents required higher levels of grammatical accuracy and appropriate professional vocabulary. Several participants admitted



that they often spent extra time revising their written work to ensure clarity and correctness. These findings indicate that teachers' challenges are not limited to classroom speaking but also extend to professional written communication.

Discussion

The findings reveal that speaking is the most essential English skill for teachers in international schools. This result reflects the nature of teaching as an interactive profession that requires constant verbal communication. Teachers use speaking extensively to explain lessons, ask questions, provide feedback, and manage classroom activities. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Rahman (2021) and Widodo (2020), which found that speaking is the dominant skill required in professional educational settings. It also supports the view of Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), who argue that ESP programs should prioritize authentic communicative needs.

The high importance of writing also indicates that teachers' professional communication extends beyond classroom interaction. Writing tasks such as preparing reports, lesson plans, and professional correspondence require formal and accurate language use. This finding supports the idea proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) that ESP should be designed based on learners' target situations and occupational demands.

The findings regarding professional communication tasks demonstrate that instructional communication dominates teachers' daily responsibilities. Giving instructions, explaining content, and classroom management were rated as the most important tasks. This suggests that teachers need specialized classroom English expressions and strategies to perform effectively. These findings align with Brown (2016), who states that language instruction should reflect real-world communication contexts.

The interview findings also reveal important challenges, particularly in spontaneous communication and formal writing. These difficulties indicate that many teachers may have adequate general English proficiency but still lack confidence and competence in professional-specific communication. This supports Basturkmen's (2010) argument that learners in ESP contexts often face gaps between general language knowledge and workplace communication requirements.

Based on these findings, the study proposes four ESP instructional modules: Classroom English, Instructional Communication, Parent-Teacher Communication, and Professional Writing. These modules are designed to address the authentic communicative needs identified in this study and may contribute to improving teachers' professional English competence in international school contexts.



D. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the English language needs of teachers working in international schools, focusing on the language skills they require, the professional communication tasks they perform, and the challenges they encounter in using English. The findings revealed that speaking is the most important English skill for teachers, followed by writing, listening, and reading. This indicates that productive language skills play a dominant role in teachers' professional responsibilities, particularly in classroom interactions and instructional delivery.

The study also found that giving instructions, explaining content, and managing classroom interactions are the most frequent professional communication tasks requiring English. In addition, teachers use English for parent communication, meetings, and report writing, showing that their professional language needs extend beyond classroom teaching into administrative and interpersonal communication. Interview findings further highlighted several challenges, including difficulties in explaining complex concepts, engaging in spontaneous communication, and producing formal written documents.

These findings suggest that teachers in international schools require specialized English training that addresses authentic workplace communication rather than general English alone. Therefore, ESP programs for teachers should be designed based on real professional needs and should include practical modules such as classroom English, instructional communication, parent-teacher interaction, and professional writing. It is expected that the findings of this study will contribute to the development of more relevant ESP courses and support teachers in improving their professional communication competence in international educational settings.

This study was limited to a small number of participants in selected international schools. Therefore, future studies are recommended to involve larger samples and explore broader educational contexts in order to provide more comprehensive insights into teachers' English language needs.

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